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Culture and Christianity Negotiated in Hindu Society

A Case Study of a Church in Central and Western Nepal

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In Middlesex University

2016

By

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ABSTRACT

Culture and Christianity Negotiated in Hindu Society

A Case Study of a Church in Central and Western Nepal

This thesis examines in what ways and to what extent Nepali Christians retain or change their way of living after they become Christians. This is achieved through a case study approach focusing on four selected congregations. These cases examine the life of the Christians from conversion through socio-religious negotiations of boundaries to cross-religious relationships and friendships. These cases are also a lens for identifying whether or not Nepali Christians connect in a logical way with the local culture through an inculturation process. The research methodology draws on primary source data from fieldwork and recorded interviews. The qualitative data are analysed using Grounded Theory Analysis which at the same time serves as a constant comparison data validation in examining internal and interrelated consistency of interviews. Secondary source data encompass literature ranging from the disciplines of anthropology and theology to Nepalese history.

The conclusions reveal that, when practising their belief among traditional religious people, Christians demonstrate spiritual insight about traditional religious life. These insights provide opportunities for Christians to play key roles in local Nepalese life. Negotiation of both social and religious boundaries has proved to be challenging to most Christians particularly within their own exclusive domains. Christians have however made attempts to address any potential conflicts across the religious divide. The most significant contributions of this research are: i) to demonstrate how Christians proactively negotiate socio-religious boundaries; ii) in doing so to provide information about Christians' attitude to traditional Nepalis and to other Christians, and iii) to provide evidence for and about Christian individual sovereignty during decision-making processes. These are new insights about Nepalese Christianity and the process of inculturation.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Asha Church - an alias for the case church; the real name of the case church is not found in this thesis.
BMMF	Bible and Medical Missionary Fellowship, its earlier name was Zenana Bible and Medical Mission. BMMF changed its name again to Interserve and has now over 800 partners according to their website.
EHCC	Eastern Himalayan Church Council
EHM	Eastern Himalayan Mission
EHMC	Eastern Himalayan Mission Council
FBO	Faith Based Organisation
GAC	Gorkha Asha Church (main church)
GTA	Grounded Theory Analysis
HMGN	His Majesty's Government of Nepal
INF	International Nepal Fellowship, a Christian umbrella INGO organisation based in Pokhara. The early name of INF was Nepal Evangelistic Band (NEB). According to their website they are involved in hospital work, health and development programmes, HIV / AIDS education, counselling and care work among displaced people and TB and leprosy clinics.
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
I-xx	Informant no. xx (for example I-05); the informants are usually given pseudonyms in the text but footnote references are given as informant numbers for possible future reference. I-xx/yy (for example I-05/12) refers to informant no. xx paragraph no. yy in the transcripts. Occasionally the abbreviation may be: I-xx (yy min). This means that the reference is taken from the audio recording of informant I-xx at point yy min.
KAC	Kathmandu Asha Church
NAC	Nuwakot Asha Church
NBF	Nepal Border Fellowship, a prayer group that developed into an annual uniting group for several mission organisations during the first half of the twentieth century in India. They played a key role in setting up contacts with HMGN and promoting the idea of an indigenous Nepali church.
NCCI	National Council of Churches in India
NEB	Nepal Evangelistic Band, see INF.
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
QDA	Qualitative Data Analysis

RBMU	Regions Beyond Missionary Union, which is a frontier mission organisation playing a key role prior to the opening of Nepal in 1951, not least due to Elizabeth Franklin.
RMM	Raxaul Medical Mission
TAC	Tanahun Asha Church
TRP	Traditional Religious People: this term is occasionally used for all the Nepali Hindu castes inclusive of the Buddhists, and all traditional groups and different spiritual worshippers of any traditional kind, animists/shamanists, all who are not Christians. TRP does not comprise Islam, Roman Catholicism or Christian sects like Jehovah's Witnesses and the like. These are not regarded as traditional Nepali and will be mentioned separately where needed.
WEC	Worldwide Evangelisation for Christ
UCNI	United Church of Northern India
UMN	United Mission to Nepal, a Christian umbrella INGO organisation based in Kathmandu. According to their website their vision is 'Fullness of life for all, in a transformed Nepali society.' The mission is involved in education, health, peacebuilding, sustainable livelihoods and hospitals.
YWAM	Youth With A Mission, one of the largest international mission organisations.

GLOSSARY

<i>Arghoun</i>	This is the second and larger important funeral rite among the Gurung which takes place from days to years after the funeral. It is religious where family members are provided with opportunities to carry out their obligations to the deceased. ¹
<i>Avatar</i>	Literally a descent, it appears in a corporeal form of a/the deity or a superhuman being. ²
<i>Bazaar</i>	Shopping area, market place, a bazaar usually emerges at greater or more important crossroads where people tend to gather.
<i>Bhai-tika</i>	This is a ritual between brothers and sisters on the last day of <i>Tihar</i> , where sisters put <i>tika</i> on their brothers. There is exchange of money, food, flower garlands and many ceremonial things included in this, for many, joyful event.
<i>Bokshi</i>	A witch, an evil woman
<i>Bombo</i>	A Tamang religious practitioner reminiscent of a shaman; he usually goes into a kind of a trance where he manipulates spirits.
<i>Chakra</i>	This means wheel. ³ It is a Hindu concept and has the meaning of an energy centre of the human body, there are usually seven chakras. Each chakra has its specific characteristic encompassing aspects of physiological, conscious and other specifics along the spine. ⁴
<i>Chhang</i>	A form of home brew fermented from rice, millet, maize and wheat. ⁵
<i>Chhewar</i>	Ritual shaving of head (male child)
<i>Churot</i>	Cigarette
<i>Dalbhat</i>	<i>Dal</i> and <i>Bhat</i> which is basically lentil soup and rice but often with various vegetables, even meat at times. It is eaten daily by most Nepalis in its basic form, lentils and rice, except in the northern regions of Nepal where rice is not available.
<i>Dashain</i>	An all-Nepali festival in the autumn, it is the biggest and lasts two weeks.
<i>Dharma</i>	This word has a variety of meanings. In this thesis it is used as the customary and religious observances of a caste or a sect. The word embraces moral merit, virtue and good conduct. ⁶

¹ Gurung, 2012, 1

² Lipner, 1994, (Select glossary)

³ Burnett, 2003, 330

⁴ V, 2015

⁵ Dhital, 2001, 36

⁶ Dictionary, 2010, 474

<i>Dhido</i>	Popular traditional Nepali food, maize and other kinds of wheat mixed up in boiled water and meat. ⁷
<i>Didi-bahini</i>	Commonly used in colloquial Nepali language meaning big sister and younger sister, or just ‘sisters’.
<i>Gundruk</i>	Popular traditional Nepali food, basically green leaves with cauliflower, the vegetables are dried or buried and fermented before being eaten, radishes and mustard are added. ⁸
<i>Isai</i>	Nepali word for Jesus
<i>Janajati</i>	Indigenous groups of Nepal with their own tradition, history and language; <i>Janajati</i> are many groups of different people and are in diverse ways in opposition to the mainstream <i>Parbatiya</i> .
<i>Janne</i>	A Hindu religious practitioner similar to a <i>jhankri</i>
<i>Japa</i>	Recitation of mantras
<i>Jat</i>	Literally it means caste or ethnic group. In <i>Muluki Ain</i> there is no difference between these two words.
<i>Jaymashi</i>	Literally it means victory in Christ, a Christian Nepali greeting used instead of <i>Namaste</i> .
<i>Jhankri</i>	General Nepali term for a witchdoctor
<i>Karma</i>	Literally the <i>Sanskrit</i> term means action, it refers to a person’s accumulated actions over a lifetime. Karma determines this individual’s status at next rebirth. ⁹
<i>Kiranti</i>	Denotes a group of people, primarily Rai and Limbu; it expresses a relationship to nation-state Nepal. ¹⁰ The Yakha and the Sunuwar are generally counted as belonging to the Kiranti group as well. ¹¹
<i>Kiriya</i>	Funerary death ritual, many rite performances including temporary abstention from eating of salt, wearing white clothes etc.
<i>Lama</i>	There are two understandings of Lama. 1) A religious practitioner whose special skill originates from the Tibetan Buddhism; in Nepal there are <i>lamas</i> among Tamang people and other <i>Janajati</i> . 2) Tamang also use Lama as a surname without being connected to any ritual speciality.
<i>Lambu</i>	A Tamang religious practitioner, derives his power primarily from the act of sacrifice, is often used in healing processes.
<i>Mala</i>	Big Flower String around the neck

⁷ Recipe, 2015

⁸ Recipe, 2015; Gundruk, 2012

⁹ Burnett, 2006, 295

¹⁰ Russel, 1997, 330

¹¹ Bista, 2004, 39-40, 85

<i>Mandali</i>	Nepali word for church, it is not used much any more. The more general word ‘church’ (चर्च) is used instead.
<i>Tantra-Mantra</i>	This is a generic term for sorcery exercised by a <i>jhankri</i> or a <i>lama</i> . It is not only sorcery but refers to all religious rituals aimed at healing that make use of mantras. Another version is <i>Mantra-tantra</i> .
<i>Muluki Ain</i>	Muluki Ain means ‘law of the country’. The 1854 MA prescribed a caste order for the country and specified different rules and punishments depending on one’s caste. In 1854 it was called Ain, at later amendments it was called Muluki Ain.
<i>Namaste</i>	is a non-contact way of greeting each other meaning ‘I bow to you’. Meanwhile in its broader context, in the Hindu worldview, it has deeper significance, therefore, the one being bowed to is ultimately Brahman, whom the Hindus believe we are all part of.
<i>Pachyu</i>	A Gurung religious practitioner, it denotes a priest or a shaman.
<i>Panchayat</i>	A four-tier hierarchical system of assemblies as the structural way of a rule of government which lasted 1962-1990, it was introduced by the king. ¹² The Panchayat system, although democratic, became largely a tool of Brahman domination. ¹³
<i>Pap</i>	Evil, sin, misfortune; an evil intention and guilt, this leads to a bad <i>karma</i> .
<i>Parbatiya</i>	The Gorkhali or Khas Kura language which today is known as Nepali, the <i>Parbatiya</i> is also the name of the hierarchical Hindu mainstream people, the sociopolity directed by the culture of the twice-born Hindus. ¹⁴
<i>Prasad</i>	Sacrificed food to the idols.
<i>Puja</i>	Hindu worship, performing prayer rituals to honour and worship deities.
<i>Pujapath</i>	Paying homage to a god ritually, a ritual of hospitality to a deity or deities in which such elements as water fruits, coconut, and cloth are offered. ¹⁵
<i>Pundit</i>	A <i>pundit</i> or a <i>pandit</i> is a Hindu scholar in Sanskrit.
<i>Raksi</i>	Alcohol, distilled liquor made of grains or unrefined sugar for household use. ¹⁶
<i>Samsara</i>	Reincarnation cycle of Hinduism, Buddhism, Bon and others.

¹² Shaha, 1990, 5-6

¹³ Whelpton, 2007, 180

¹⁴ Gellner, 1997a, 19

¹⁵ Dictionary, 2010, 584

¹⁶ WHO, 2004, 1

<i>Sanskar</i>	This word embraces many issues and notions such as refinement, perfection, education, cultivation of the mind and a purification rite. This term is discussed in much more detail in the body of the thesis.
<i>Sanskrit</i>	<i>Sanskrit</i> is a language from which other languages originate such as Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Gujarati, Nepali, Marathi, Bengali, Rajasthani, Assamese, Sinhalese, Maldivian, Romy and others. Hindu scripts in Sanskrit include Bhagavad Gita, Vedas, Mahabharata, Upanishads, Puranas, Epics and other books. Sanskrit scholars use the language today primarily for chanting.
<i>Sanskriti</i>	Culture, in this thesis it has been given another value.
<i>Saree</i>	Women's clothing, it is a long piece of fabric which is wrapped around the body and ends over the shoulder. It is Hindu clothing but many use it; the red is a classic woman's colour but it is available in every possible colour and pattern.
<i>Shakti</i>	Power, strength and energy and related notions; deities like Shiva and Vishnu have power. The power or energy of <i>shakti</i> needs to be understood with a divine even eternal relation. ¹⁷
<i>Sindoor</i>	Red powder in a married woman's hair in the parting, it often goes together with <i>tika</i> .
<i>Tagadhari</i>	Twice-born are the high-caste people who wear the sacred thread over their shoulder, Brahmins, Chhetris, Thakuri, ascetics etc.
<i>Tihar</i>	This is a popular festival like <i>Dashain</i> and closely follows the <i>Dashain</i> festival.
<i>Tika</i>	A religious mark on the forehead, it is usually made by red powder and placed by the finger on a daily basis but occasionally it can take complex forms and colours and be mixed with rice.
<i>Topi</i>	Traditional Nepali hat.
<i>Varna</i>	There are four <i>varnas</i> or castes, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra.
<i>Videshi</i>	Foreigner, it is mostly used for westerners or outside the SE Asian area.

¹⁷ Lipner, 1994, 50

CHAPTER 1

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Nepal is a picturesque country landlocked between the two most populous countries in the world, India and China. India is primarily Hindu and the autonomous Chinese province of Tibet is Buddhist, specifically Tibetan Buddhist. The religious influences over the centuries combined Nepalese traditions, Hinduism and Buddhism, animism/shamanism, ancestral and spirit worship to create a Himalayan lifestyle that to many outsiders appears as a form of mysticism. No one ever colonised the country or any of the kingdoms except when they were all subjected to one king in 1769. The country is resourceful and the people hard-working yet they face endless calamities: disease, landslides, poor electricity and water supplies, earthquakes, disappointing political rulers, trafficking, alcohol and drug abuse, and the massacre of the royal family.

In this country a Nepali Protestant church has been established. The term evangelical will be used to describe this kind of inter-denominational mainstream church by which focus has been put on the main doctrine which is salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ's atonement.¹⁸ Other significant characteristics are a strong belief in the bible, the vast majority adheres to the believer's baptism and therefore a conversion and they believe in healings. This charismatic-baptistic style church, consolidated with

¹⁸ This phrase, 'salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ's atonement' is widely quoted.

strong pillars of faith during the Panchayat period, was built on hundreds of people's testimonies and sufferings away from families, whether in jails or deported from districts, some felt the need to leave Nepal. The church has Nepalese cultural distinctive characteristics even though some, particularly urban churches, open up to western tools like electronic musical instruments and men's suit and tie (used by some pastors), presumably not imposed by the missionaries but reflected throughout Nepalese culture as it seeks to imitate the west. But the bible is in Nepali, the songs and most of the tunes are Nepali, the clothes they wear are Nepali, and, of course, the food they eat is Nepali. Church buildings, house fellowships and service form are Nepali. The important point in comparative perspective is that – despite the role of a small number of foreign missionaries nurturing it from the 1950s, and despite the fears of foreign influence on the part of Nepal's Hindu majority – the church in Nepal is overwhelmingly Nepali, in its leadership, in its origin, and in its culture. Why and how this is so is worthy of academic investigation. Although this church is thriving, little has been written about it.

I have come to know this church and have set out on a quest to comprehend the life and lifestyle of its Nepali Christians and how they manage the challenges in establishing churches and the way they fit into local society, with its culture and indigenous life. There is the possibility that Christians have adopted a Christian culture which hampers mixing with the neighbouring community and thereby become isolated. This has often been seen in missionary reports from other countries: C. Peter Wagner quotes one Native American who felt the cultural oppression of Anglo-Americans, 'Do Indians *really* have to love the organ?'¹⁹ See also Dean S. Gilliland's excerpt (Appendix E). Adopted into or being subjected to a foreign culture by missionaries, is not beneficial

¹⁹ Keen, 1975; Wagner, 1989, 226

for the Nepalis; it detaches them from everyday life with traditionally religious people. Even so, conversion is expected to cause socio-religious changes depending on the way the Christian belief system has been propagated and subsequently how the converts have been able to adapt their beliefs within the Nepali local setting. Changing religion in Nepal is a great challenge and necessitates wrestling with the issue on an everyday basis practically because of the social relationships within families who may not be Christians and theoretically because of an incomplete theology as many church leaders, particularly before the days of Democracy, are illiterate. Christians have to navigate through the Nepalese society in a new way. The overall purpose of the thesis is to examine the life and the lifestyle of Christians in order to understand Nepalese Christianity.

In this thesis the use of the word Nepali is for the language and for the people both as an Adjective and as a Noun, the only use of the word Nepalese is as an Adjective qualifying an Abstract Noun.

1.2 Preliminary Thoughts for Research

My time in an International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO) working in Nepal and later through my own Faith Based Organisation (FBO) gave me opportunities to become acquainted with the Nepali church. I was impressed by the church for various reasons. Many churches claim membership of different denominations of the Episcopal, Presbyterian, Congregational, Conventional or Methodist churches, and/or are organised by national Christian groups like the Nepal Christian Fellowship (NCF), Assemblies of God (Pentecostal) or AGAPE (Pentecostal/Charismatics) or other smaller

independents.²⁰ There are, though, factors other than differences in churches, there are characteristics influenced by their particular tribal culture or caste-orientation, rural or urban churches or other specifics like house-churches, large-sized churches or youth churches. A 'local church' (Nepali Church) is never fully local as Christianity comes from somebody or somewhere bearing that Christian heritage, so also with the missions when Christianity came to Nepal.

These groups differ because of their differences in theology, but in visiting an arbitrarily chosen church only one thought arose: This church is Nepali. Literally speaking there is little difference between a Conservative church and the Pentecostals and also between an NCF and an AG church. It seems that the church in Nepal has largely become Nepali regardless of which group they claim membership of and this has fascinated me since I came to Nepal for the first time in 1988. Is this just an expression of denominational (mis)understandings or has the Christian Nepalese culture seriously undermined any attempts to make denominational churches by making it Nepali? And if so, how did they do it? It is well known that a few denominations had already come to Nepal by the 1970s but the behaviour of single Christian worshippers does not vary a lot although the conduct of the churches may vary. The Catholics will not be mentioned much in this thesis because evangelical believers and Catholic believers only on rare occasions worship together; there is no real mutual recognition between Protestants who are the mainstream Christian groups and Catholics in Nepal. Generally, the great respect the Catholics enjoy in Nepal across most groups is because of their good educational system and other good works.

²⁰ Gibson, 2014, 112; NCF was formed in 1960; in 1998 it became registered under the new name National Churches Fellowship of Nepal (NCFN) or NCF Nepal. It is still known as NCF. AG was formed in 1981 when it was established. AGAPE was formed in 1978 by Robert Khartak.

The first Christian Nepalis from outside were Nepalis whose ancestors had gone to India and who lived in India primarily as migrant workers under British colonial power in the tea gardens or as soldiers in the British army; they returned to Nepal after one or more generations. Accompanying them were foreign missionaries who while in India had joined them and, therefore, they were accustomed to Nepalese life, culture and language. The reason why the Nepalis were not entirely Scottish, English or American in their ecclesiological observance is mainly due to the historical development of the evangelical lifestyle among the Nepalis, as it took place along the Indo-Nepal border on the Indian side for the last hundred years up to the establishment of the churches inside Nepal. The most noteworthy activities contributing to this development were the Gorkha Mission that operated among native Nepalis in the vernacular, the house fellowships that combined daily lives with Christian fellowship, and the translation of the bible into Nepali and the composition of many Nepali and Hindi songs. Also imperative was the existing work of foreign missionaries prior to the move as they cultivated a positive attitude towards establishing a Nepali church without foreign influence at a leadership level. Although the size of the Nepali evangelical church is not known and is a minority religion in Nepal it is still growing rapidly compared with other evangelical churches worldwide, and its thousands of churches are still almost exclusively with a Nepalese leadership. It could be that, with this forming of a Christian identity among the Nepalis in India, inland Nepalis had opportunities to associate Christianity with Nepalese culture and not with foreign culture once Nepali missionaries were in Nepal. This circumstance is significant to understanding why Christianity appears well embedded into the local society.

1.3 Research Hypothesis

The main thesis for this research is that, presumably because the first evangelists were Nepalis and not the foreigners, and the foundations of the church in Nepal from the beginning were laid by Nepali Christians from India, the Nepali church has managed to keep significant Nepalese cultural domains as part of its identity. In other words it is hypothesised that the Nepali Christians do not live their lives in isolation from Nepalese society but that there has been an inculturation process through which the Christian belief system has been logically connected to Nepalese culture.

1.4 Research Questions

This research is a case study of a church in Nepal and an examination of its Christian life and lifestyle. In examining this church with respect to substantial differences between Nepalese traditional religions and Nepalese Christianity, questions relating to the formation of the church and its uniqueness will be addressed.

In what ways and to what extent have Christians of this church retained or changed their way of living after they have become Christians? To what extent do the Christians interact with the people in the society around them? Given the research hypothesis it is expected both that the Christians have retained parts of their lifestyle as they are Nepalis in Nepal, but also that there are parts of their lives that do change as a consequence of allegiance to Jesus Christ. Conversion from a traditional life to Christianity calls for a substantial change of life, and the purpose of this research is to assess the areas that are influenced and the meaning of the conversion.

1.5 The Significance of the Research

This investigation provides information in three main areas. The first is that within a relatively short period of time, since the middle of the twentieth century, the Nepali church was established and consolidated in Nepal. Although there are newspapers, general articles and missionary books about the church during this period of time, there is only limited research on the Nepali church. Secondly, the vast majority of Nepalis are Hindus but there are also many Buddhists. Buddhists often follow the Hindu festivals and the Hindus commonly worship or respect the Buddha. Christian Nepalis have changed their entire worldview from reincarnation (*samsara* and *karma*) which usually incorporates ancestor worship and animism to Christianity. This is a break with these traditions as Christianity is a monotheistic non-inclusive religious worldview. Anthropologically, this makes such research interesting because of Nepal's strong traditions. Thirdly, a specific area is given attention and that is the way converted Nepalis face their new life in their old setting and re-socialise back into Nepalese society. Nepali Christians may set examples for others in the ways they successfully - or unsuccessfully - negotiate such boundaries.

Dealing with all factors and socio-religious elements that form the identity and lifestyle of a Christian would be far beyond the scope of this thesis; therefore, I will focus on issues brought forward by the informants that more broadly concerned them. I have not dealt with many factors including language challenges, leadership issues, poverty, differences between castes, certain ceremonial rites and persecution. However these omissions should only stimulate other researchers to engage in further studies about the Nepali church.

1.6 Overview of the Findings

I used a semi-structured interview guide to develop qualitative interviews. The interview being largely on the informant's terms and conditions provides ample data with the advantage that I had questions to pose when needed. The disadvantage was that interviews were not directly comparable partly because not all the questions from the semi-structured interview-guide were given to all informants, partly because of the nature of the questions relating to the informants and partly for reasons of time spent during the interviews. The ways the informants replied to questions varied; some would speak a lot on certain topics adding their own issues. Answers were not always concise but more reflections on various issues and notions leaving me with a lot of complex data. Such reflections were disadvantages because of their complexity but also advantages because they served me with information I had not expected. Such reflections were perhaps the most valuable information I received as they explained and reflected notions that mattered to them. One or more informants independently of each other touched on unexpected issues that were significant to their experience so affecting the direction of the thesis. The findings were generally more informative than I had expected, and I had to be flexible and follow the information I received. Therefore, the thesis was expanded to looking into not only how Christian belief was advocated within a society but also the Christian life and lifestyle in Nepal. This is the nature of qualitative data from the field. The qualitative data contain information and the challenge is to extract that information as credibly as possible.

On one historical topic of Nepalese Christianity, conversion under different government rules, there was an overwhelmingly high response that was easy to analyse because of the concurrent attitude among the informants. I started the analysis of the data with answers and reflections related to this topic and this became part of the church history.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

An overall structure of the argument is obtained by analysing data from primary and secondary sources to observe whether there is a consistency in how Christians relate to their own society given that there are different approaches depending on various backgrounds and personalities. The analysis of the interviews is directed towards the relationships, friendships and confrontations between Christians and traditional religious people both from a spiritual perspective and from a mental/emotional/physical point of view.

Chapters 1 and 2 are the introduction and the methodology. Arguably the most important part of the thesis is the fieldwork as it supplies new information. The analysis of data is undertaken using Grounded Theory Analysis.

The political background of Nepal is briefly mentioned. Much information about this is available in other places both by Nepali and foreign scholars. It is included here as an introductory section to the Nepalese Christian history in Chapter 3. The case study is of a Gorkhali church that has spread in the Central and Western Development Regions and is integrated into the Christian mainstream community. Chapters 4-7 are the analyses starting with conversion in Chapter 4, making use of conversion theory to comprehend challenges facing the people of Nepal. This is followed up in Chapter 5 by analysing the ways Christians negotiate the boundaries of their own traditional community but from a Christian perspective. For this an artificial tool is developed which nevertheless is a great help to categorise and classify acceptable and unacceptable negotiable approaches. Chapter 6 is from the perspective that Christianity is a relational belief system and asks to what extent informants are able to have contact with traditionally religious people.

Chapter 7 largely draws on Chapters 4-6 to build a theory based on identifying the effects of certain extracted factors.

1.8 Review of Literature

The outlines of the political and Christian historical developments are given in Chapter 3, it comprises the time period which is called Modern Nepal. The focus of this thesis is a study of a church in central and western Nepal which was established by the end of the 1970s, with the view to examining Christian lifestyle from the perspective of which, and to what extent, Nepalese socio-religious domains have been retained among Christians. The Protestant Christian Nepalese history began outside Nepal along the Indo-Nepal border on the Indian side, a place where foreign missionaries had also come. Particularly in the twentieth century, both before and after the opening of Nepal, articles and missionary books were beginning to be written. After the opening of Nepal missionaries kept a low profile both inside Nepal but also among the sending bodies in home countries to avoid jeopardising Christian activity inside Nepal. Nevertheless missionary books were written and some need to be mentioned. Lily O'Hanlon's small but informative booklet from 1974 describes how the team came from Nautanwa to Pokhara, and Shining Hospital was established.²¹ This book brings alive a time which was essential for the Nepali church. International Nepal Fellowship's (Shining Hospital's) own book from 1971 which describes their work in the beginning up to 1970 gives a good view of those days from their perspective.²² In 1979 came Jonathan Lindell's much quoted book on the United Mission to Nepal and the circumstances during the time it was formed, not least as he elaborates on cultural descriptions and on

²¹ O'Hanlon, 1974

²² INF, 1971

political and diplomatic details as he masters it, the book came on the 25th anniversary of the UMN.²³ Norma Kehrberg has undertaken a study (1997-1999) about the Nepali Christians and their identity, a useful book which has become much quoted.²⁴ In the same way Rajendra Rongong has presented a book from 2012 about the early churches, he contributes with the other two books to a broader understanding of those early years in the 1950s in Nepal.²⁵ Rongong was in the Bhaktapur team among the first Christians who came from Darjeeling and established the church in Nepal. Those mentioned above clarify issues that go back to the establishment of the church in the beginning. ‘Beginning’ is in this thesis the first Christian activities inside Nepal in the 1950s even though there were Christian activities just outside Nepal dating back to the 1850s. John Whelpton has made a good and recent contribution to the history of Modern Nepal viewing the country from different perspectives.²⁶

The most comprehensive Christian work undertaken by a researcher is done by Cindy Perry when she first wrote a biographical history of the church of Nepal in 1989 (MA thesis), an interesting way to bring in another perspective of the Nepali church, and in the early 1990s she conducted comprehensive research for her PhD about Nepalis around the world emphasising the Himalayas.²⁷ The amount of information in that book is enormous; her thesis is imperative to understanding the Christian historical background which primarily was outside Nepal but which leads to the later church development inside Nepal. The online journal (blog) Voice of Bhakti (2002-2005) was created and administered by Mark Pickett and others who also wrote many of the

²³ Lindell, 1979

²⁴ Kehrberg, 2000

²⁵ Rongong, 2012

²⁶ Whelpton, 2007

²⁷ Perry, 1993; Perry, 1997, Chapter 3

informative and challenging articles, such as ‘Text and Context in Dialogue.’²⁸ Ramesh Khatri has made a substantial contribution to Nepali church life through his articles in Nepali and English.²⁹ He is now propelling theological work in the vernacular in Nepal to safeguard Nepalese culture. Bal Krishna Sharma conducted an interesting research about funerary rites as Christians’ approaches are different from traditional Nepalis. Sharma is handling the notion of spiritual powers and pondering over ways Christians could improve on negotiating their funerary boundaries. Another interesting thesis is underway by Nima Raj Ghising as he has done research on Christian Tamang of Kanchanpur, about their conversion and identity. I make references to one of his unpublished chapters which he kindly provided for me.³⁰

The entire study world-wide on conversion is massive by now; Donald McGavran a missionary to India, one of the first missionaries to examine conversion seriously, spent many years studying reasons why Indians did not convert totally. He came to various conclusions but centred on the issue of protection from social dislocation. Social dislocation he said often led to unhealthy dependencies often on missionaries leading to unnatural lifestyles. Christianity should be embedded in a way that provided social security and a feeling of being in one’s own culture. Social dislocation on the other hand puts people in a position that can provide opportunities for conversion, according to Lewis Rambo.³¹ As far as Nepalese conversion is concerned studies are still rather limited but Ian Gibson has carried out research among Christian Newars of Bhaktapur; he has a good outline of the historical development of the Nepali church and his focus is

²⁸ Pickett, 2002; Pickett, 2003; Pickett, 2004 and other articles

²⁹ Khatri, 1997; Khatri, 1999; Khatri, 2007; Khatri established the first two-year non-denominational bible school, Nepal Bible Ashram (p. 72) situated in Kathmandu, at an early stage (1981) which caused him to leave the country; this gave him an opportunity to write a PhD in the UK.

³⁰ Ghising, 2012, personal notes

³¹ Rambo, 1993, 166; Pickett, 1993, 320

on conversion and ethical change.³² Blandine Ripert studied the Tamang conversions to Christianity and has an interesting perspective arguing for pragmatic views as Tamang people assess Christianity to be a better worldview in modern society than traditional Tamang which make them convert.³³ Tom Fricke's field study of Tamang people in the north of Dhading who have converted in great numbers takes another stand as he finds that societal explanations cannot explain the reason for conversion but that it is a decision made entirely by the Tamang people. I agree with Gibson's assessment of Fricke as he comments on him stating

[t]hus while socio-economic disruption provides the general context for conversions it cannot explain why one individual would convert and not another, nor can it illuminate the experience of conversion.³⁴

Anthropologically, Fricke also argues for the complexity of what develops when conversion meets modernity.³⁵ Paul Hagen's field study of twenty Brahmans who converted to Jesus Christ pays attention to the strong Hindu Nepalese context Brahmans represent and the social pressure to preserve it. Hagen explains in his article imperative issues like family relationships and Hindu ideology instill and worries.³⁶ One of his main conclusions is that, according to Brahmans, Christianity is a belief worth converting to despite problems and that over time most of the Brahmans who experienced dismissal from families were accepted back into their families again.³⁷ David Gellner's analysis of conversion in a Hindu-Buddhist balanced community

³² Gibson, 2014

³³ Ripert, 2001, 138-141

³⁴ Gibson, 2014, 119

³⁵ Fricke, 2008, 59

³⁶ Hagen, 1999, 29; Ideology (used by Hagen): here used as that dogma of Hinduism claiming that leaving Hinduism causes repercussions for one's parents.

³⁷ Hagen, 1999

reveals societal challenges to opting for another religion. Gellner gives the example of one of the kings of Bhaktapur who had dialogues with the Capuchin fathers.³⁸

The central and western parts of Nepal, particularly among the indigenous people of Nepal (p. 49) like Tamang, Gurung and Kumal but also among the Hindu dominating sociopolity, are characterised by involvement of priests or religious practitioners and by people who have an animistic/shamanistic lifestyle imagining powers and spirits in living and nonliving objects.³⁹ David Holmberg has made an extensive study on the Tamang in describing their lifestyle including the three main religious practitioners who are called *lambu*, *bombo* and *lama*. Each of these has his field of work although there is an overlap and they also each have their individual means of practicing their rituals.⁴⁰ Gabriele Tautscher describes the Tamang ceremonies and rituals using many illustrations. The Tamang myths, legends and histories about their past and beliefs are the focus of her book.⁴¹ Larry Peters describes the different steps a Tamang shaman (*bombo*) goes through when practising, moving into trance. Peters is into what he is talking about as an initiated shaman himself. He analyses the different ecstatic steps from a psychoanalytic and anthropological perspective.⁴² Peters, Tautscher and Holmberg manage to convey the deep spiritual involvement of the Tamang particularly from the side of the ritual specialists to the reader. In the same way András Höfer describes the *bombo*. Höfer has additionally produced a noteworthy work identifying and mapping the different Nepali ethnic groups and castes; his book is useful and

³⁸ Gellner, 2005, 755-780

³⁹ The implication of 'Indigenous People' is not that they are more indigenous than the Khas Aryan strain people that historically came into Nepal from the west, while the various mongolian peoples came in from the north east, as they both became settled peoples. The 'Indigenous People' denote certain groups of strain people (p. 38)

⁴⁰ Holmberg, 1989

⁴¹ Tautscher, 2007

⁴² Peters, 1999

comprehensive. The Nepalese ‘system’ is not easily comprehensible as there is a great number of different people, languages, fragmented groups and mixed castes and ethnic groups.⁴³ David Gellner also wrote good overviews tabulating ethnic indigenous groups.⁴⁴ Gellner embraces many Nepalese issues and has made much of Nepalese nationalism, ethnicity and politics, particularly the socio-economic and religious life of the Newars.⁴⁵

Bill Prevette has conducted a qualitative data analysis research project regarding children in Romania using Grounded Theory Analysis as his methodology.⁴⁶ His research method using core central categories in relation to his research question and the way different actors and categories are interdependent is a great inspiration. In the same way Alan Johnson’s research in Thailand regarding leadership using Grounded Theory has demonstrated great understanding of this discipline, its strengths and weaknesses.⁴⁷ Prevette and Johnson demonstrate a beneficial variety in the way Grounded Theory Analysis can be used, and its limitations.

Hwa Yung’s quest for an Asian theology adopts notions and issues regarding inculturation and authenticity of theological development in cultures that widens understanding of socio-religious thinking, particularly in Asia.⁴⁸ John Suk’s edited collection of Filipino church life demonstrates tangible concepts of local theology as authors like Timoteo D. Gener look at the Christian inculturation process as redeeming the culture, and Reuel U. Almocera suggests theological responses that moderately

⁴³ Höfer, 1973; Höfer, 2004

⁴⁴ Gellner, 2004

⁴⁵ Gellner, 1997a; Gellner, 1997b

⁴⁶ Prevette, 2008

⁴⁷ Johnson, 2009

⁴⁸ Yung, 1997

address old beliefs, and Ed Lapiz asserts that ‘western thought divides everything’ and to counteract such influence which he points out is problematic has devised a list of cultural points with which Christians should engage.⁴⁹ These perspectives which are from the Philippines contribute to marking out the context of doing local theology. Wayan I. Mastra who allegedly succeeded in building a local church in Bali was analysed by Christopher Sugden. Sugden explains how Balinese Christians were dislocated physically from their community and culture and adopted alien identities. Sugden explains how Mastra devised a programme parallel to Ed Lapiz’s cultural list to maintain and sustain Balinese culture.⁵⁰ Douglas G. McKenzie in association with Mastra’s book ‘The Mango Tree Church’ describes the Christians of Bali, and Mastra’s church in detail. Mastra’s attitude to religions is helpful, pointing to Christians being ‘liberated to address other religions in a new way - with understanding and respect, rather than with denigration.’⁵¹

The anthropologist Paul G. Hiebert has much to offer regarding culture and Christianity. His Critical Contextualisation model advises dealing with a culture’s old traditions and ceremonies in much the same way as Almocera did. Hiebert indicates that being critical means neither denying nor uncritically accepting old traditions.⁵² David J. Bosch has undertaken a major work on the theology of mission incorporating a number of mission settings over time and with weighty formulations defining concepts and notions. He formulates a suggestion for an emerging ecumenical paradigm and views it from different perspectives.⁵³ Roland Allen demonstrated concern over contemporary

⁴⁹ Gener, 2005; Almocera, 2005; Lapiz, 2005

⁵⁰ Sugden, 1997

⁵¹ McKenzie, 1988, 71

⁵² Hiebert, 1984

⁵³ Bosch, 1991

missionary methods and, by comparing them with Paul's methods and putting them on a tight leash, he marked out differences.⁵⁴ R. Daniel Shaw and Charles E. Van Engen invite the reader to enter into a good understanding of communicating God's word in different cultures and point out its complexity.⁵⁵ Dean S. Gilliland has edited a book focusing on inculturating theology for mission and challenging Christians to question whether the message is communicated truthfully. R. Daniel Shaw, Viggo Sogaard and C. Peter Wagner and other authors wrote practical approaches about transformation through the word.⁵⁶ Jesus Christ appears and is portrayed differently in the many cultures world-wide, often being adopted into the cultures according to their characteristics. Volker Küster has made a collection of many different christologies; these articles are eye-openers concerning cultures.⁵⁷

Finally, the quotations from the bible are all from the English Standard Version (ESV).

⁵⁴ Allen, 1962

⁵⁵ Shaw, R. Daniel et al., 2003

⁵⁶ Shaw, 1989, 141-159; Sogaard, 1989, 160-182; Wagner, 1989, 219-238

⁵⁷ Küster, 1999

CHAPTER 2

2. Methodology and Methods

This thesis is a case study enquiring into the local settings of four congregations to explore possible connections and patterns of meaning for Nepali Christians. This includes their lifestyle, identity and interaction with the traditional people in their neighbourhood.⁵⁸ I clarify in this thesis that conversion to Christianity involves changes of attitudes and approaches to people. People are not only independent individuals but also have different and personal backgrounds as the case studies and occasional descriptions of the informants' lives reveal. The informants are then not seen as a rigid group of people. The complexity of the material elicited the application of Grounded Theory Analysis (GTA) as my methodology. GTA requires a laborious effort and data are thoroughly analysed, in order that I can contribute to the general body of knowledge within the church of Nepal. First, I explain the use of GTA (Section 2.1), then an overview of my epistemological view (Section 2.2) and how data are validated (Section 2.3). I have modified Paul Hiebert's Contextualisation Model with my definitions on syncretism and synthesis (Section 2.4). I set out preliminary thoughts for case selections (Section 2.5), and account for my choice of case selections (Section 2.6) and selection of informants (Section 2.7). Lastly I describe the fieldwork (Section 2.8).

2.1 Grounded Theory Analysis

The presuppositions I had about this church society during my work in Nepal earlier on challenged my focus epistemologically to choose a data analysis/interpretation method

⁵⁸ Ratcliff, 2008, 117

that was independent of these preconceptions. There are a great number of data analysis methods available for Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) research. Each of these has specific focuses designed to meet different types of research; the nature of the study in this thesis is cultural which more specifically means an interdisciplinary study including theology and anthropology.⁵⁹

Qualitative research can vary greatly, for example from description, to conceptual ordering, to theorising; I will use qualitative research to categorise data through conceptual ordering to analyse the behaviour of the people of interest. Theory is generated as data are analysed. Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss state with respect to Grounded Theory Analysis:

[At] the heart of theorising lies the interplay of making inductions (deriving concepts, their properties, and dimensions from data) and deductions (hypothesising about the relationships between concepts; ...)⁶⁰

Grounded Theory Analysis (GTA) is thus making use of both inductive and deductive methods to conceptualise data to form categories and generate theory with respect to the research question. GTA derives concepts from empirical data in the field; from those concepts/properties/dimensions relationships are categorised and hypothesised. Strauss also terms this the Constant Comparison method, but the point is that this type of method - after having derived the concepts - is largely or at least sufficiently independent of my presuppositions to be a useful and applicable method.

⁵⁹ Ratcliff, 2003; Moustakas, 1994, 180-182; Borgatti, 2006; Corbin, 2008; Johnson, 2004; Johnson, 2009; Reisman, 1993; Wasserman, 1994

⁶⁰ Corbin, 2008, 56

Strauss writes that GTA is a theory ‘designed especially for generating and testing theory’ and, according to Alan Johnson, it is not speculative but a theory developed in data, from first-hand sources.⁶¹

2.1.1 Grounded Theory Analysis in Practice

In this thesis, categories of data have become important to point to issues of interest. Four of the categories making up this research are shown on the right-hand column of Table 1. The categories are obtained by working with data segments that are conceptualised (coded with a specific concept name) and then compared with other data segments or entire paragraphs. When different data segments are coded together into the same concept (like in a file archive system) they provide different perspectives and meanings of the same socio-cultural domain. In that way, wider information of a given domain belonging to that concept can be obtained. If appropriate, a concept name can be assigned to a group of data segments.

Earlier named concepts are shown in Appendix L, they come from Code System (C). Table 1 shows on the left-hand side that eleven code-families are identified, which are derived from Code System (C); where different normal concepts relate in some way, this is called Code System (D). By comparing the data segments further, also across the code-families, comparing entire concept names (axial coding) where appropriate, a new structure emerges which is then called Code System (E) and so on; these are not shown in this thesis but the last Code System (H) is shown on the right-hand side of Table 1. Code System (D) is organised but not useful for analysis; therefore, further comparison between different data segments and concepts (constant comparison and axial coding) is

⁶¹ Strauss, 1987, xi; Johnson, 2004

necessary. At the same time, the final outcome has to be meaningful in relation to the research question; consequently there are concepts that are no longer interesting in this matter whereupon they are discarded (data can at any time be looked into if needed). Eventually the final Code System (H) appears on the right-hand side on the table (Table 1) with four categories that will be analysed. Code System (H) therefore is meaningful and useful.

Ideally, the GTA method should end with one single high-level category that could be elevated to an abstract concept covering all of the data. I did not find that this was possible; I ended up with four categories where I had discarded some because they did not relate to my thesis and I drew in one more category, or rather one high-level concept, which I felt had been discarded too early about conversion. Conversion stories were therefore not developed entirely from the ground but it was my decision to include that (Chapter 4).

The categories where I found GTA useful are the generation of main headings of data in relation to the research question. Each category has sub-headings (high-level concepts) that contain the actual data segments (Table 1, right-hand column). Therefore, categories are primarily drawn in as starting points during the analyses; according to the GTA method, data under these categories appear to have greater significance than other topics of interview data. This is only true with the chosen research question in mind; another research question would view data from another perspective and would demand other kinds of comparisons and hold other areas of data as more or less significant; therefore, the effect of another research question would be another set of categories. This is the epistemological approach of the social reality of that domain using Grounded Theory Analysis (GTA).

<p style="text-align: center;">Code Systems</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Development from System (D) to System (H)</p>	
<p>Intermediate (D) and Final (H) Code Systems. The Bold marked Concepts at the Final Code System have been made Categories</p>	
<p>Code System [D] - Intermediate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forming Christian Identity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lifestyle after Conversion Being a Christian Nepali in a Predominantly Hindu Culture Spiritual Substance Christian Nepalese Stereotypes and Markers Negative Stereotypes Testimony <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encounter Acutely Felt Tension (Crisis) Bible-Study Friendships and Social Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equal Relationship-Attitude across Ethnic Groups Pro-Active in Forming of Friendship Critical Contextualisation Religious Dynamics between the two Cultures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Misconception of the Christian Faith Power Encounter Potential Conflicts Christianity not Fully Accepted Theological Discussion Issues about Respect - Disrespect Nepalese culture & Traditional Religions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Navigation in Local Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Festival Issues Sanskriti Issues - All Nepali Sanskar Issues - Ritually Discernment Traditional Culture Race Characteristics Languages Locating the Informant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dramatic Events Christian - non-Christian Environment Extended Christian Family 1st and 2nd Generation Christians <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Looking for Guidance The Future Church Church and Christian Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing the Gospel Pastoral Care Church & Parachurch Leadership & Leaders Values Church History Foundations of Nepalese Christianity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Praying under Pressure Persecution Culture - Biblical and Nepali <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural tensions - Biblical vs Local OT and Hindu rituals Parables Bible 	<p>Code System [H] - Final</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forming Christian Identity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lifestyle after Conversion Being a Christian Nepali in a Predominantly Hindu Culture Christian Nepalese Stereotypes and Markers Cross-Religious Relationships and Friendships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equal Relationship-Attitude across Ethnic Groups Pro-Active in Forming of Friendship Critical Contextualisation Religious Dynamics between the two Cultures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Power Encounter Examples Spiritual Nepalese culture & Traditional Religions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sanskar Issues - Ritually Christians and Ritual Practices Rituals Sanskriti Issues - All Nepali <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Syncretism and Nominalism Christians in Sanskriti

Table 1: Code System (D) and Code System (H)

2.1.2 The Importance of Memos

While conceptualising data segments, data memos were written and attached to each conceptualised data segment, in fact ‘memo writing serves as a [concept- and] category-

generating method'.⁶² Memos are small reminders of thoughts and connections that emerged while reading a little data segment. Such memos could have add-ons and, in fact, be long paragraphs. Usually, I analysed one paragraph from an interview at a time, frequently covering several concepts in one memo. It is good not to have too many memos detached from each other and spread around which, although different, touch on certain common issues.

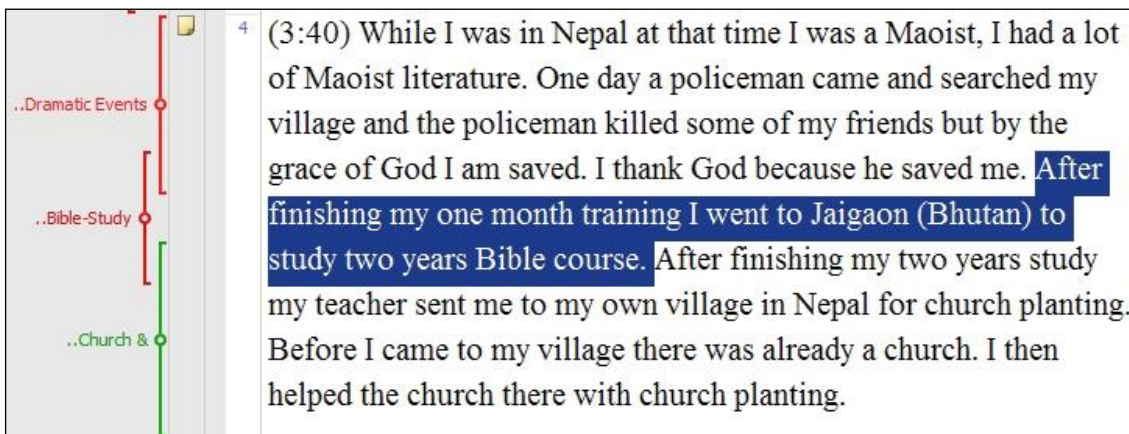


Figure 1: Code and Memo Example (Memo 222)

From the paragraph of the interview example (Figure 1) I wrote the following memo where there is a reference to another memo to expand on a specific issue:

Change of Life: She was a Maoist. The killing of her friends must have shocked her. She thanks God today. Thinking about her life (see data generating Memo 222, Figure 1) portrays a woman who has been exposed to life-marginal experiences. Now she was told to build churches. She seems to be a very determined woman fighting for what she thinks is right.⁶³

Figure 2: Memo Example (Memo 223) of Simple Data Segment

⁶² Saldaña, 2009, 164

⁶³ Memo 222, Date: 070910, Locating the Informant (Figure 1); this is an example of a 'memo. To keep order it has a sequence number, a date and a heading (Locating the Informant), Memo 223, Date: 080910, Change of Life (Figure 2). About Maoists, see Section 3.1.3

A series of personal reflections and emerging hypotheses in addition to fragments of thoughts were taken down in memos. Memos were linked either to the more interesting paragraphs of transcribed interviews or linked to the concepts, while some memos are just free or unattached memos like notes in a notebook. Memos are written when a specific kind of action or attitudes from the informant generates interest. Particularly in the beginning I wrote many; subsequently memos adopted a higher level of abstraction or more reflection as I began to remember the contents of the conceptualised data segments and could join issues in a given concept; the memos became longer. A memo is not 'just a memo'. A memo, even small, can be the result of a lot of thinking, reflection and wrestling with one or more issues in one or more data segments; I have found that there were useful things ready to be copied directly from a memo into the thesis during the analysis. Below is an example of a larger memo that explains the use of a given category (Table 1, Code System (D), Forming Christian Identity).

Memo Example - Coding Explanation

Coding Explanation (Forming Christian Identity): This category embraces a series of low-level codes describing the way Christians build up their lives among traditional religious Nepalis. They have many challenges while forming their new ethnic and social identity in their old culture. They have to learn to relate to their family, colleagues, students at school, to people in the bazaar and neighbours etc. in a new – yet in the same old – way. They are embedding their gospel lifestyle in their own culture.

Throughout the short story of Christianity in Nepal an understanding of Christian behaviour has been made manifest both among the Christians and the traditional religious groups, a series of Christian Nepalese Stereotypes or Markers that characterise the Christians. These are important because Christians relate to them and these markers both help Christians and challenge them. However, common to them is that they usually put Christians in a difficult situation while being together with non-Christians because there are minor cultural aspects which may cause offence or give rise to religious segregation and incur the traditional groups' disfavour, for example when the Christians refuse to go to the temple to sacrifice to the idols or they do not participate in drinking. Nevertheless, in living out their new lifestyle it appears that the Christians have caused the traditional religious Nepalis to respect them because they do not lie, they build toilets, get higher education etc. So they cause offence but also generate respect.

Table 2: Memo Example (Memo Blue) of Coding Explanation ⁶⁴

Memos have great significance in the process of analysing as these are not only explanatory but also hold mental reflections and begin analysis at the time. The Memo Example (Memo Blue) of Coding Explanation (Table 2) comprises issues relating to the new identity of the Christian Nepalis. Are they still Nepalis, do they feel like Nepalis, are they proud of being Christians? Do people respect them, and do they respect the traditional religious people (TRP)? This is not only socio-cultural but is also a matter of identity and contributes to the overall interpretation of the extent to which the Nepali Christians still belong to the Nepalese society; the memo explaining this category points

⁶⁴ Memo Blue, Date: 072410, Coding Explanation: Forming Christian Identity (Table 2); this memo does not have a sequence number but has been labelled 'blue', a colour chosen to indicate that it describes a concept and not a data segment. In the same way there are different coloured labels designating other notions and issues than specific data segments.

to the fact that for the Nepalis there may be a change of identity as a change of allegiance from the traditional Nepali to Jesus Christ; hence dealing with Christian personal issues gives rise to wrestling with socio-cultural issues.

It is significant to emphasise that experiences differ between informants because this means that each informant contributes uniquely. The high-level concept, Forming Christian Identity, which early on in the process of analysis was elevated to a category, comprises a range of issues all relating to the identity of the Christian. Most decisions and reflections have been set down in memo writing like comments to data segments, small ideas, threads, and theories, hence memos are important and the number of memos has passed 400.

2.1.3 Text Analysis Computer Programme, MAXQDA 10

There are a wide range of different computer programmes available to support the data analysis process. I have found that MAXQDA 10 from VERBI GmbH is a functional programme with a good user interface encompassing the features necessary to operate QDA in a secure way.⁶⁵ Twice my programme was down partly due to disc crashes on my computer over the years, even so, I was able to restore everything. Computer programmes do not do the job for any researcher but they help in organising things. Instead of having a chaotic number of stickers stuck on walls and the computer monitor and loose papers lying about, most of them can be kept reasonably organised with numbers, dates and common-sense names in the computer. Documents, code-systems, memos, audio-recordings, stills, videos, web-sites, social network information,

⁶⁵ VERBI, 2015

telephone numbers, sketches etc. can be linked together in a QDA programme as a well-working filing system.

2.2 Epistemological View

My central methodology is Grounded Theory Analysis (GTA) applied to interviews which is a Qualitative Data Analysis method (QDA). I wanted to enquire into the nature of certain domains of the social reality of the thirty-five people in my four selected cases.⁶⁶ Since this thesis explores the social reality in the lives of selected informants, the epistemological position could not be based on a positivist approach because that usually takes on large numbers of uniform empirical data as its scientific method.⁶⁷ A postmodernist theory, which is very different from the positivist theory, does not appear to be ideal either, as it is ready to question existing results and welcomes discursive views on issues as the postmodernist theory is not comfortable with single truths. Rather, a methodology based on qualitative research which meets the social reality is the interview method which can explore relevant socio-cultural interests on a personal level with an opportunity to go into great depth.⁶⁸ In this way, many single truths and opinions are compared and possibly combined to form a theory. Qualitative research, therefore, will be used in this thesis to denote my epistemological position based on a theory between the positivist and the postmodernist theory, an ethnographic stance but not only descriptive, including an attempt to understand connections, causal relations and consequences for the informants.

⁶⁶ Bernard, 1994, 168; Carey, 2009, 68

⁶⁷ Positivist approach, Quantitative Data Collection

⁶⁸ Carey, 2009, 59

For this, the questions devised as semi-structured interviews (Appendix C) identified and brought the targeted issues to light giving information and explanations about the nature of the social reality. My methodology was based on my epistemological view. Therefore, I chose a qualitative research project. For this reason, I realised during the fieldwork that the interview-guide not only had to be altered but the entire interview session had to be allowed to take a more discursive form than I had expected.

2.3 Validation of Data

The discussion on the Epistemological View (Section 2.2) of qualitative research, as being between the positivist and postmodern approach, shows that it is a good base for later data analysis. The validation of interview data is complex. It is expected in qualitative research that the extent to which data can be reproduced, the reliability, may be low but equally it is expected that the validation of data is high because of the personal contact and inquiry.⁶⁹ Therefore, my view has been that articulations from informants or interviewees are reasonably trustworthy; I have had no reason as a starting point to mistrust statements communicated during an interview. Michael Bloor states that there is not much point in rejecting findings produced in accordance with an appropriate method simply because it is not triangulated with other methods.⁷⁰ Nonetheless, there are different issues that affect the quality of the data. I here pay attention to three concerns relevant for this thesis: objectivity, informant accuracy and informant representativeness.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Carey, 2009, 42-43; Hammersley, 1990, 61

⁷⁰ Bloor, 1983, 156

⁷¹ Bernard, 1994, 171

Objectivity: ‘Perfect objectivity is impossible’, according to H. Russell Bernard, as he defines objectivity not as value neutrality but as ‘becoming aware of one’s biases, and transcending them...’ An obvious bias for me as a researcher in these four case studies would be my frequent visits to some of these churches since 1994, and consequently the good relationships I have achieved with many; this may give me a biased approach to many of their works, ideas and practices; it may even affect my attitude to the credibility of the informants. Objectivity can be much improved by being aware of this bias.

Accuracy: Bernard claims that informants may make errors of various kinds in their reporting, errors coming either from acts alleged to have been done or omitting acts which have been done. This is an old problem, and such responses may likely be substitutions for other questions about cultural norms or be inaccurate answers for other reasons.⁷² Validation of data, therefore, is contested. A possibility would be to analyse the data using a triangulation method in merging multiple theories, methods and observers and other materials into a more accurate method. However, this may not be the solution as David Silverman refers to the fact that in cultural research ‘the object of knowledge *is* different from different perspectives.’⁷³ Although Miles and Huberman are fonder of triangulation method than Silverman they acknowledge the problem delineated by Silverman.⁷⁴ Triangulation then does not appear to be the solution to data validation in qualitative research which attempts to find information about the socio-religious ontology of the informants (see, though, p. 258). Silverman, instead, suggests alternative ways to validate data: one is the constant comparative method which is a

⁷² Bernard, 1994, 173-174

⁷³ Silverman, 2011, 369-370

⁷⁴ Miles, 1994, 267

method already used in this thesis while using Grounded Theory Analysis to conceptualise data.⁷⁵ Constant comparison method is the key method in GTA where different data segments are compared to each other to obtain broader ideas and understanding and to develop theories. This method is useful to validate data, while obscure data segments or data that could be questioned are by and large caught using this method, and it has thus become the major validating method.

Representativeness: Informant representativeness is interesting. The question is how representative the informants are and therefore how valid the results outside the cases are. It is tempting to want to achieve representativeness among the wider Nepalese Christian community. There are many similarities in the Nepali church across all denominations and even though it is not entirely clear to what extent representativeness can be claimed outside the cases, social phenomena are not random and where the same kinds of responses are found in multiple cases it seems fair to assume that they are representative, at least within the analogous socio-cultural domains the responses occupy.

It has become clear that I cannot take data at face value. In validating data I have chosen internal consistency in the interviews, meaning to hold paragraphs or sub-paragraphs, data segments, of interest up against its own context throughout parts of the entire interview to scrutinise its consistency, which is a constant comparison, and also to use constant comparison with other interviews during the coding process when conceptualising data segments to obtain a high level of credibility.

⁷⁵ Silverman, 2011, 384

There are other options which have been used as data validation. During interviews, there were opportunities to observe the body language of the informants including the way informants spoke, and signs of pressurised feelings on specific points of view. Interrogating, enquiring, talking and even eating with people, in addition to listening to various discourses between other people informally, off-recording, while being around observing or talking with the translator after an interview about the issues, are equally important. This kind of observation, which this thesis calls 'participant observation', provides a broader perspective on a particular interview. It may be argued that this is just another form of triangulation. To me it is a matter of making credible qualitative research by also spending time with the informants in their own setting. I acknowledge that if Christians claim they do not smoke or drink I do watch to see if this is the case, so from this perspective data validation is assured through participant observation. However, I do not call it triangulation partly because only certain kinds of data are able to be validated through participant observation and partly as I have not used a systematic way of validating data during participant observation in the same way as is the case with constant comparison.

Since the fieldwork, I have met almost all of the informants once or twice in addition to contacts through the social network, Facebook, where I am occasionally engaged in online dialogue with about a third of the informants. Photos from Facebook, which were meaningful to my studies, have been copied and saved for future reference when analysing data. This has proved important to me in relation to the linkages of families and friendships that were not entirely clear to me earlier. This way of validating data that are used to generate evidence for certain domains of the social reality of the informants is an important issue.

2.4 Syncretism, Synthesis and Critical Contextualisation

Bob Robinson defines syncretism from a theological platform as ‘the intention of seeking common ground or of dealing with contradictory elements’ between two religions or elements from the two traditions resulting in ‘some reduction’ of the Christian message.⁷⁶ Daniel Shaw & Charles Van Engen, anthropologist and missiologist, emphasise that advocating for Christian belief must cause a change that ‘take[s] place at the worldview level, not just within surface-level forms,’ and they go on to claim that ‘unless this happens, syncretism or even heresy may be the result.’⁷⁷ Michael Pye asserts from the perspective of the study of religion that there is no such thing as a mere mixture of religions. A syncretistic situation contains several possibilities, its characteristics form a coherent, ambiguous and temporary pattern. Pye furthermore says that a syncretistic pattern may take one of three courses. ‘It may lead to assimilation of weaker elements by a dominant tradition,’ or the diverse dissimilar identity elements may be ‘resolved by dissolution’ which means they are drawn apart (like Bob Robinson) or it may synthesise which in effect generates ‘a new religion’ (like the heresy mentioned by Shaw).⁷⁸ David Gellner is careful not to implement too hasty definitions on this term as he points to a lack of agreements on the word.⁷⁹ A significant point to observe is that it would be confusing to use synthesis as a synonym for syncretism.⁸⁰ The sketch below (Figure 3) is Paul Hiebert’s model for Critical Contextualisation but modified with this information from Robinson, Shaw and Pye and the word Contextualisation exchanged with Inculturation for reasons explained later (p. 219).

⁷⁶ Robinson, 2004, 185

⁷⁷ Shaw, 2003, 144

⁷⁸ Pye, 1994, 220-222

⁷⁹ Gellner, 1997c, 279-280

⁸⁰ Pye, 1994, 228; Gellner, 1997c, 289

Retaining religio-cultural values and structures during the process of negotiating Christian boundaries is sensitive and there are different classes of responses to observe, according to Paul Hiebert.⁸¹ One is that advocates of Christian belief or church leaders enforce religio-cultural solutions and decisions in accordance with their personal convictions without having ensured that these have fully been accepted among the local people, Hiebert's DENIALS OF THE OLD TRADITIONS. In this case the message will be received but the traditional belief will keep living underground, according to Hiebert and Shaw. Although it is a coherent unity of the two religions there are several meanings. The original priests (shamans, *lamas* etc.) are expected to keep doing their job among Christians as the Christian pastors also will; in theory there are many possibilities of how the local people adopt the mix.⁸² This coherent, ambiguous mix between religions is what Pye and also Robinson call syncretism. Alternatively the message of the advocates for Christian belief will be plainly rejected by the traditional people as they cannot envision it fitting into their society. The second response can be embedded into Hiebert's UNCRITICAL ACCEPTANCE OF THE OLD TRADITIONS; it challenges the Christian belief system. Either that or the traditional belief system is assimilated into the other system which is syncretism. The challenge for the Christians is that in being uncritically acceptable to the old traditions there is a real possibility that the Christian belief system is assimilated into the traditional belief system. There is another option as instead of assimilation they could synthesise and generate a new religion. Synthesis is essentially a new religion formed by two or more existing religions which is not expected to happen in Hindu Nepal. A synthesis between Hinduism and Christianity would still produce Hinduism because of the multi-faceted

⁸¹ Hiebert, 1984; Paul Hiebert's model of Critical Contextualisation: 'contextualisation' has been exchanged with 'inculturation'

⁸² Pye, 1994, 226-227

nature of Hinduism, it would be a de facto assimilation of Christianity into Hinduism and therefore be interpreted as syncretism. Although Buddhism is more exclusive than Hinduism, Nepalese Buddhism has been influenced by Hinduism in many ways like participating in Hindu festivals and taking on *tika* and much the same goes for Buddhism as for Hinduism.⁸³ Synthesis is a minor option but not likely in Nepal when Christianity is involved; the term syncretism will be used in this thesis where needed.

Eventually this brings us to the critical response, Hiebert's DEALING WITH THE OLD TRADITIONS, which lies somewhere between the exclusive and the non-discriminating or uncritical response. Hiebert points out that 'critical contextualisation does not operate from a mono-cultural perspective.' He says that 'it seeks to find meta-cultural and meta-theological frameworks that enable people in one culture to understand messages and ritual practices from another culture with a minimum of distortion.'⁸⁴ In other words, they are negotiating their socio-religious domains. The important and critical way is to deal with the old belief system, that is, neither deny it nor uncritically accept it but to face the facts of the culture and to minimise cultural discontinuity which is significant to the converts from a Christian anthropological perspective, according to Liana Chua which is also reminiscent of Donald McGavran's suggestion.⁸⁵ Reuel U. Almocera has proposed three theological responses to the spirit-world in the Philippines which have similarities with Hiebert's model, also Almocera suggests that a gentle construction of a local theology that addresses the old beliefs is beneficial.⁸⁶

⁸³ Gellner, 1997c, 282-286; Nepalese Buddhism includes Theravada, Mahayana (Tibetan Buddhism) and Vajrayana (Newar) traditions.

⁸⁴ Hiebert, 1994, 92

⁸⁵ Chua, 2012, 513; Pickett, 1933, 320

⁸⁶ Almocera, 2005, 89-92

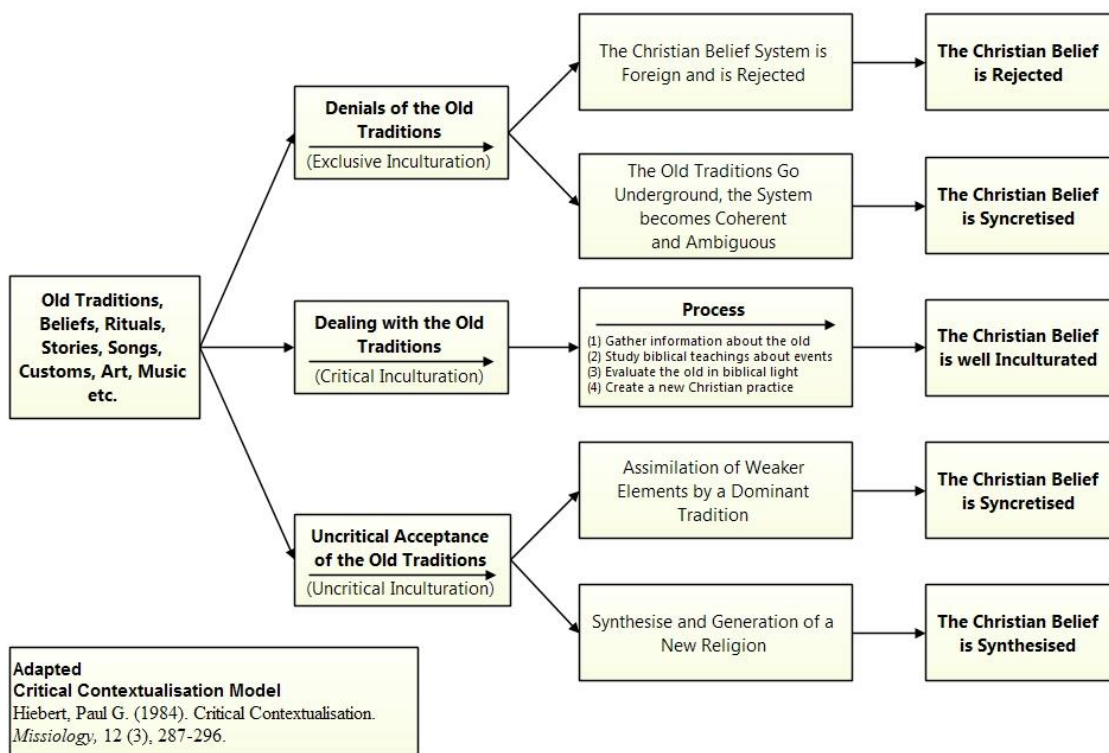


Figure 3: Adapted Critical Contextualisation (Inculturation) Model

Dealing with the old traditions or forming local theology, as it in fact is, is an inculturation process which is expected to reveal new challenges as deeper disclosures of the bible alongside new evaluations of the old traditions - its rites and rituals in a biblical light - are brought into play; in a sense it is a syncretism or perhaps a synthesis of Christian practice as part of the inculturation process but not of the belief. Local theology, although local, requires that the worshipping communities avoid getting provincialised and always nurture a vital contact with the wider Christian communities, according to David Bosch (Section 6.1, p. 217).⁸⁷

Mahayana Buddhism in Nepal has adopted Hindu traditions and it may be a comfortable manoeuvre to classify it as a syncretic religion, but Gellner argues that Mahayana

⁸⁷ Bosch, 1991, 456-457; Hiebert, 1984

Buddhism is not syncretic as it is in accord with its practice of implementing ‘Hindu forms and using them to express the ultimate superiority of the Buddhist path;’ in that way it has obtained its own independent traditions whereby it may be synthetic but not syncretic.⁸⁸ There are similarities between this and Nepali Christianity as the nature of Christianity in general is to adopt surrounding culture and operate through and by means of that culture to present its message and belief. Critical inculturation eases preservation of social integration after conversion to Christianity, according to Hiebert, Chua, McGavran and Almocera. Therefore critical inculturation is seen as significant to the well-being of Christians and the way Christianity is taken in and noticed by the local community (Section 6.1.1, p. 219-223).

2.5 Rationale for Case Selection

Prior to determining the case selection (Table 3) I had to realise that getting the right sample was genuinely a complicated matter. I thought about this over a period of almost two years before I arrived precisely at these four cases. In 2007, before embarking on this research, I was in Nepal talking with people about doing research concerning the Nepali church, thinking that I could talk with all the main leaders in the entire country. I was interested to learn about the driving force behind their evangelism and their eagerness to establish new churches that appeared well embedded into their community. In Nepal, the term for establishing churches among the evangelical Christians is *mandali/church sthapita garnu*. Earlier, during the Panchayat days, a church was called a *mandali*, whereas today it is almost exclusively called a church. Following an internal dialogue with myself, I realised the hopelessness and absurdity of such a quest, and I was driven to think that I could interview all the founders of Nepali churches before

⁸⁸ Gellner, 1997c, 282-284

they were too old as many of these primary sources were already between 70 and 90 years old. With the help of some local Christians in Kathmandu, I started to make a list of key church founding people from the beginning of the Nepali church epoch which quickly grew long and was far from finished. As I reflected over the situation, the fascination of the - seemingly - well-inculturated Nepali church has become more than any other issue a phenomenon that could lead me into further research.

The Asha Church with its main church, sometimes called a ‘mother church’, and its daughter churches and a number of small house fellowships, was a church where I recurrently had the privilege to minister during my time as a missionary in Nepal. ‘Asha’ is a pseudonym and means ‘hope’; it is not an uncommon name for a church in Nepal. I knew the main congregation, the mother church, situated in Gorkha but was aware that many things had changed over the almost ten years since I left Nepal. I knew that to do research in this church was manageable as a case study, and in 2009 I established contact with key people with the aim of doing research.

I aimed at making a case selection of the churches. Some churches have primarily Tamang people as members, other churches include several castes. The terminology of the legal code of 1854 does not make any distinction between the anthropological term ‘ethnic group’ and ‘caste’, according to András Höfer. There is only one Nepali word, *Jat*, to cover both terms and its substance has never been defined properly.⁸⁹ It may be convenient to be able to distinguish between an ethnic group and a caste; therefore, this thesis will not regard them as synonyms. David Gellner favours the following explanation: When ‘a given population shares a common language, a common culture,

⁸⁹ Höfer, 2004, 10

and a common attachment to a given territory, or at least a historical link to these shared features, it thereby constitutes an ethnic group.’ This may be so even though different castes (Table 4, p. 62) are involved.⁹⁰

The rationale behind selecting churches was to bridge a gap between different cultural backgrounds and also to span rural and urban churches. It was not necessary to select all the churches as some churches were socio-culturally close. The rurally placed big mother church in the Gorkha district attracted me as many different castes are represented there, so this is the first case study. In Patan, Kathmandu, where I stayed, there was another church, a new urban youth church, which formed an interesting second case study. For the third case, I wanted to go far away, and I was recommended by key leaders to go to Nuwakot district where some of the founding people came from at the end of the 1970s. I was informed there was a church in Tanahun, Western Nepal, which I did not know of. I found out that its location was on the main east-west highway in a big village; I wanted to go and explore that church, and it formed the fourth case study.

⁹⁰ Gellner, 1997a, 16

Case Selection Characteristics				
District:	Gorkha	Kathmandu	Tanahun	Nuwakot
People	Mixed Primarily Tamang	Mixed Primarily young Tamang	Primarily Gurung, Magar, low-caste	Tamang
Location	Rural but easily accessible	Urban City	Urban Town	Rural
Specifics	Mother church	Youth/Mission church	Traditionally Established Church	Original Area
Region	Western	Central	Western	Central

Table 3: Case Selection Characteristics

This selection of four cases spans different cultures including the youth and the locations are well represented (Section 2.6). These four cases allowed me to interview people who represent the church's cultural diversity. This diversity gives me an opportunity to enquire more into its cultural life and interaction with the wider traditional community.

2.6 Description of Cases – Fieldwork Areas

The cases differ from each other concerning people, topographic characteristics, location and other particulars. Some main features are listed (Table 3). The fascination of this case study is to see how they live out their Christian faith. The fieldwork was undertaken in Central and Western Nepal during spring 2009, in the districts of Gorkha, Kathmandu (Patan), Nuwakot and Tanahun (Map 1). In what follows I have briefly described the four cases with special emphases on their characteristics.⁹¹

⁹¹ Nepal, 2005, 69, 73, 77, 93, 97

2.6.1 Gorkha Asha Church

Gorkha Asha Church (GAC), a pseudonym, is the ‘mother church’ and, considering it is in a village, is a rather big church of about 200 members. The first church was not called Asha Church. This was a name given to the church later by the leader of NCCC, Nepal Campus Crusade for Christ, part of a global student ministry with HQ in the USA. In the village of GAC they grow rice and other crops, and the village has been evangelised since the founding of the church in around 1980, and many households in the village are Christian. The first Christians in this area were Tamang people from Nuwakot and Dhading districts (Section 2.6.3). Some of these people had a missionary approach; they wanted to reach across to other castes. Among them were Sukuman Lama (Section 4.2.1) and Surya Tamang (Section 5.2.2.3). This meant that new people from other backgrounds and *Jats* (castes and ethnic groups, p. 38) were added to the church. Some of these were Tamang, Gurung, Magar, Kumal, Newar, Brahmin, Chhetri and Thakuri (Hamal) and different low castes like Biswakarma, Sarki, Pariyar and Nepali and more.

The congregation expanded and built a new and purposeful building in the 1990s. Some of the congregation remained in the old building, whereas others went to the new church building; this church building was designed not only to be for the local congregation but also a venue for Christian activities, hence its size. Today, there are activities for youth, for different retreats and leadership training, even interdenominational meetings. The congregation still comprises a majority of Tamang partly because it is a Tamang village and partly because other fellowships in neighbouring non-Tamang villages are being established, but a broad representation of the castes from the area, both high-castes and low-castes, are found in the church.

2.6.2 Kathmandu Asha Church

This urban situated church has two main characteristics that distinguish it from particularly the rural church in Gorkha but also from most other churches. The first is that it is a youth church. ‘Youth’ is not really defined but is their own term, as the vast majority is under thirty years old. It was founded in 2007 mainly to reach out to the younger generation who had relational ties to the Asha churches elsewhere, and who had moved to Kathmandu and Patan largely for educational and work reasons. Within a week after its establishment, the church was filled with more than 100 people who almost all had relational ties to people in primarily the Gorkha Asha Church but also in other Asha churches.

Despite being a youth church there are also other ages represented as some youngsters lived with their parents in Kathmandu, and one or both parents preferred to attend the same church as their children, but also people of older ages who have no direct relational ties may attend the services; apparently they like the youth form of church service. The second feature is that - and I have never seen this before in Nepal - there are benches to sit on. I was informed that the youth did not want to sit on the floor when they came to church wearing their fancy clothes. The church is situated outside the ring road in Patan. Even though the placement of this church seems awkward and less attractive than many other churches inside the ring road or even in the countryside, there is a sizable and growing population in the neighborhood as people in Kathmandu are beginning to move outside the ring road. The youth enjoy the church, so it is filled every Saturday, and there is even a ‘Sunday School’ in a room adjacent to the main room with 10-20 attenders under the age of fifteen. Ethnically the attendance is almost entirely Tamang. Of ten informants in this church, seven were all ‘young’ Tamang, 18-30 years and three were Tamang in their forties. The latter three were the pastor and two

of the committee leaders (elders) of the church. The reason for the ethnic bias towards the Tamang is its focus as a caretaking fellowship for the youth who came from Gorkha. Obviously other people join in.

2.6.3 Nuwakot Asha Church

One hour's drive north of Trisuli Bazar in Nuwakot west of Trisuli River is a village predominantly Christian that has a church. There are a few other churches in some neighbouring villages. They do not belong to the Asha Churches but there is an interdenominational fellowship between them. The first Christians to come to Gorkha came from this village. Now there are many Christians as the result of a strategic missionary activity from Asha Church and later also locally from Nuwakot Asha Church (NAC).



Map 1: Case Selections – Locations⁹²

This area is primarily Tamang but there are Brahmins in a neighbouring village. The landscape is typical rural Nepali with lots of fields and hills, while a road to the village was completed only recently. The village and the surrounding villages are inhabited by rural people; however, the trend among the younger generation is to move into first Trisuli Bazar then Kathmandu or other bigger cities for education and work. Many of the leaders of the church are not able to read; only a few of the generation from the pre-Democratic Panchayat era can read. The problematic relationship between the first and the second generations, as exposed in (Sections 3.5.1 - 3.5.2), is pervasive in this area. This relationship is prevalent in the rural parts of Gorkha district as well. GAC is not as rural as NAC, simply because of the relatively easy access to GAC; almost daily there are people from GAC who for various reasons are going to either Kathmandu or Pokhara, the two great cities of Nepal. The greater contact GAC as the main Asha

⁹² Google Maps (2016); Nepal, Case Selection (Loaded on 6 January 2016), [https://www.google.dk/maps/@28.112528,83.6652347,8z/data=!4m2!6m1!1szDUJXD7VG3JQ.kFfeUkZQqzMw;](https://www.google.dk/maps/@28.112528,83.6652347,8z/data=!4m2!6m1!1szDUJXD7VG3JQ.kFfeUkZQqzMw; scale undetermined (Cases are not shown on their exact positions to maintain their location secure).) scale undetermined (Cases are not shown on their exact positions to maintain their location secure).

church has with the other Asha churches, and the contact it has with churches from other societies, makes it seem less rural. People do not often visit NAC unless there are specific reasons as it is far more arduous to go there.

2.6.4 Tanahun Asha Church

The first Asha fellowship in a town in Tanahun was started by a woman back in the 2000. This fellowship was strengthened by two pastors from Gorkha church who regularly visited the fellowship in the following years. Subsequently, a young newly converted man who was cleaning and doing practical things in the GAC moved to Tanahun to work as a pastor. During his teenage years he used to be involved in gang fights but he became Christian when he was 18 years old. He had no financial support from the mother church in Gorkha but had occasional work, alongside his church work, as a rafting guide for tourists. Now this young pastor, Dhan Kumar Gurung, hereafter Pastor Gurung, has announced that his church, Tanahun Asha Church (TAC), is fully supporting him. Most of the people in this church are Gurung, Magar and low-caste inclusive of Dalits.⁹³ As in GAC, different castes are able to worship together. Generally, in Nepal, Christians have a mutual respect across different caste backgrounds.

This town in Tanahun is like numerous other towns and villages along the Prithvi Highway (Kathmandu-Pokhara road) and the premises of the congregation occupy a room like a garage. The pastor and his wife live in a rented room as neighbours to this church room. The door is a big skeleton door made by bricks and lathes filled out with iron plates which can be opened when the meeting starts. During the rainy season, it

⁹³ I-35/19

rains inside the church through the slit under the closed iron door or through the open windows above the door; needless to say it takes a measure of commitment to go to church during the rainy season but people are coming and they are even in the process of establishing new fellowships in other places. The private houses of the congregation are spread out over a large area. Some live in the town whereas others live away from the highway with their smaller or greater rice paddies in large beautiful expanses of rural land.

2.7 Rationale for Informant Selections

2.7.1 Christian vs. non-Christian Informants

The interviews provide primary source data which are all from Christian informants. It may be argued that information from traditional Nepalis as well would facilitate a better balanced view on discussed subjects. There are two arguments not to involve interviews from traditional religious people in this thesis. The first is that my focus is to study the life of the Christians. This involves their way of negotiating, their internal relationships, their attitudes and approaches to people and society, and it involves to what extent they reckon themselves to be a satisfied people despite their change of allegiance to Jesus Christ in a Hindu/Buddhist society and other personal Christian topics. The thesis is an investigation into Christians and their new lives. This information is not expected to be widely known by non-Christian people. The other argument is that although Christianity is a growing belief in Nepal it is still only a tiny minority who are Christian, according to most (Section 3.2, p. 67). Consequently Christian influence in society is minimal and it is not anticipated that traditional Nepalis are profoundly informed about the prayer life of Christians, ways of negotiating, values and emotional states like peace and love, marriage approaches and other issues and notions. So, non-Christian Nepalis are not

expected to be sufficiently knowledgeable about Christians except from Christian stereotypes like Do's and Don't's (Appendix A). Christians do not often participate in public debates, and public information about Christianity is typically extracted from Christian INGOs, which incidentally are under governmental demands of being Nepalised, or political writers or churches with prominent and impressive church buildings like the Catholics, the latter church is outside the scope of this thesis; but none of these have hands-on information of mainstream evangelical church life which may be centred around tiny house fellowships or small rented rooms which are outside the interest of the public.⁹⁴ Therefore interviewing traditional religious people about Christianity has a predictable outcome which seems to be confirmed by informants (Appendix A), and I chose to concentrate on Christians, as they are insiders.

2.7.2 Considerations while Choosing Informants

It was possible to undertake thirty-five qualitative interviews with Christians from these four churches. The identities of the informants are broadly described in the thesis when used. Informants are presented in the text with pseudonyms to make them more personal than numbers, although numbers are used in footnotes for references. It is necessary here to add a brief note on the quotations of the words spoken by the informants because most of them were interviewed in Nepali (66%) with a translator, whereas others were interviewed in English. I have had no qualms about the propriety of making small adjustments of the records for this thesis for the sake of readability as long as it does not affect the overall understanding.⁹⁵ It may be argued that any adjustment of a data segment will inevitably change its meaning; however, the reason

⁹⁴ Nepalisation: this means that foreign missionaries must be replaced by Christian or traditional Nepalis over time. Obviously this changes the character of the organisation and the relation to local churches.

⁹⁵ Wolcott, 1994, 66

for making adjustments was to correct the translator's way of presenting his translation. At times, the translator made summaries of an informant, presumably because he was unwilling to stop the informant in the midst of an explanation or a sensitive account. Consequently, as the translator already has made certain changes, I smoothed the text to make it logical; however, as I have the source recorded in the original Nepali, I can examine whether an overall understanding has been kept, at least to a certain extent, to verify the translator's information to me.

My focus among Christian members of the Asha Churches was to have an equal number of men and women because there are by and large an equal number of men and women in the church with the age representing a span from young to old, both leaders and ordinary members. Additionally, I tried to have coverage of different castes in the four churches. It appears from the graphical representation of the age distribution of male and female (Figure 4) that there are 57% male and 43% of female informants. The age distribution is fine in terms of coverage, although there are many young people. There are about twice as many adult and old men than women. The reason for this is because the church leader informants are dominated by men. This male/female bias among the adults is assessed to have little or no effect on the results of the data because the indigenous people (*Janajati*) tend to have a certain level of egalitarian socio-religious structure at least in comparison with the national Hindus (*Parbatiya*) who by structure organise men and women hierarchically. Nepal Federation of Nationalities (NEFEN, 1991) - later Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN, 1993) - responded

in 1994 to a UN resolution about indigenous people.⁹⁶ David Gellner commented on this but it is worth quoting the first of the six points of the response here:

The Indigenous People refer to those communities: Which possess their own distinct and original lingual and cultural traditions and whose religious faith is based on ancient animism (worshipper of ancestors, land, season, nature), or who do not claim “The Hinduism” enforced by the state, as their traditional and original religion.⁹⁷

The message of this point is the religious approach of the *Janajati*. Often they are called Buddhists incorporating 83% of the informants who are speakers of Tibeto-Burman languages (Tamang, Gurung, Magar) or as they are called in this thesis, the *Janajati*, but their beliefs are based on animism.⁹⁸ Animism/shamanism will be taken up later. Gellner says that NEFEN in effect is an anti-Hindu and anti-Brahman organisation.⁹⁹ This may not necessarily apply to all *Janajati* groups and individuals as Gellner talks about the organisation but may still reflect the position of many in relation to mainstream Hinduism (*Parbatiya*) in Nepal, even though *Janajati* were incorporated into the Nepalese caste system (now abolished). A task force to deal with the *Janajati* issue, National Foundation of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN, 2002), came under the government. This task force numbered and included fifty-nine ethnic *Janajati* groups in NFDIN.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Gellner, 1997a, 20; Gellner, 2004; NEFEN is a federation representing different organisations: Newars, Tamangs, Magars, Gurungs, Limbus and Rai; then there are associate groups: Chantel, Danuwar, Dhimal, Dura, Jirel, Meche, Chepang, Hyolmo, Kushwar Majhu, Thami, Tharu, Rajbanshi, Sunuwar, Thakali and the Yhambu

⁹⁷ Indigenous, 1994

⁹⁸ Gellner, personal note: Most Magars do not speak Magar and increasing numbers of Gurungs do not speak Gurung, and there are even Tamangs, particularly among the younger people, who do not speak Tamang.

⁹⁹ Gellner, 1997a, 20-21

¹⁰⁰ Gellner, 2004

Other groups are Brahmin, Chhetri, Thakuri (Hamal), Kumal and low-caste. Obviously the informants are not representative of the Nepali population due primarily to the high number of Tamang in the church, 71%, as it originally was a Tamang church. It is a balanced representation between men and women age-wise but there is no real argument for forcing a balanced representation of everything as long as the representation is reasonably good. Far more leaders are male; even so, more females are enjoying leadership and becoming pastors. One Asha church has a female pastor, as of 2013. Half of the people are in their twenties. The reason for this is partly because one of the cases is a youth church and partly because, regardless of the cases, many young people are able to speak English which made it easier for me to conduct an interview.

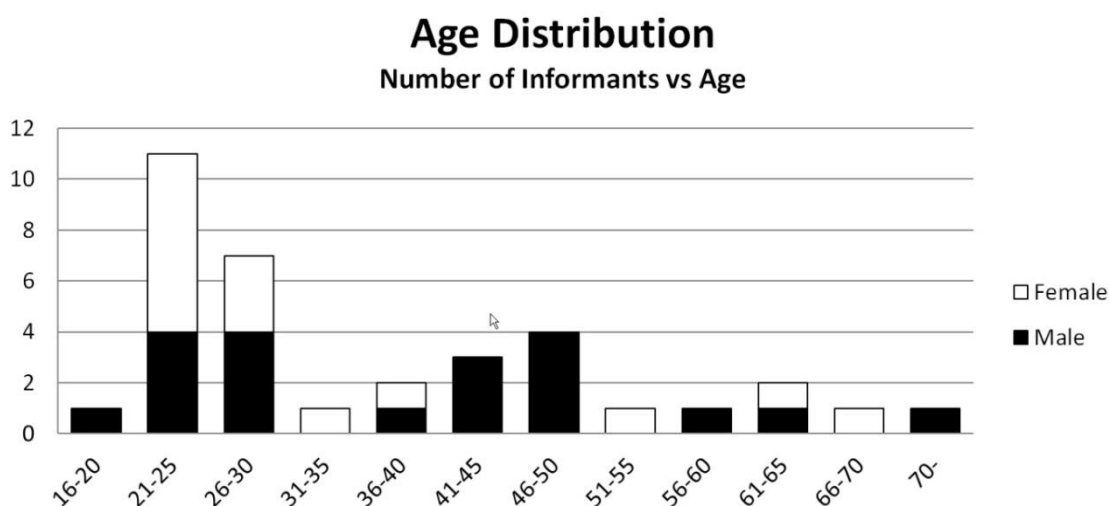


Figure 4: Age and Gender Distribution of Informants

The castes as described according to the legal code of 1854 (*Muluki Ain*) are unevenly represented in the church and are not all represented among the informants (Table 4).¹⁰¹

I have not examined what possible consequences this could have but have made some

¹⁰¹ Höfer, 2004, 9; in 1854 the National Code was only called *Ain*

notes concerning variety in caste composition (Section 3.5.4). A small number have married across tribes and backgrounds; among the informants only one, a Chhetri, had married outside her caste, with a Tamang; however, mixed-caste marriages are not unusual in any Nepali church.

2.8 Doing Fieldwork

Prior to going on fieldwork and aiming at applying the best theory with regard to the research question, I planned to generate data from the projected empirical context, the Asha Church, by interviewing people. My method was to begin interviewing key people, informants, who were associated with the foundation of the church, then finding new informants as suggested by selected insiders. In this way, directly based on new information from the interview, the insiders and I would find informants who might contribute to the research. I would not restrict myself to interviewing only those people recommended by insiders because interesting situations might occur during the fieldwork which would catch my attention. This part of the chapter concerns the fieldwork as I experienced it, and it is important because here I describe when I realised that fieldwork has unforeseeable challenges. The first part is a fieldwork report and the second part portrays the way I protected my data.

2.8.1 Fieldwork Report

Planning is one thing, carrying it out in actual fieldwork is another. To some extent, I managed to start with key people, as planned. Fortunately, I had the opportunity to meet some informants who had knowledge of the foundation of the church. I even got an interview with the founder of the church. But, thereafter, I had to be less ambitious in terms of who I could interview because people were busier than I thought, and timing became a factor as coordination between interviewees and translator required some

effort. It may at times have taken a whole day to accomplish a single interview including setting up an appointment with the interviewee, walking to his or her place, making sure that time was still available; it might start raining and they would get busy, children might come from school, animals get sick, other people come for a visit or they may not be at home when we were coming.

All data was recorded on a small digital recorder. Prior to the beginning of any interview, I asked whether I could record the interview. Fortunately, none of the thirty-five informants refused me this request. In addition, I asked whether I could take a photo; occasionally I had the opportunity to also gather the family and get a family photo. I like that, because a photo helps me remember people, the local scene including details of the scene, and a photo may convey moods and atmosphere which may not be clearly communicated from the recording. Throughout this fieldwork, I video-recorded different scenes that I felt were interesting in order to take as much as possible back home with me. I recorded, for example, a church wedding, the monsoon, laundry work in the river, and different activities in one of the villages.

I was dependent on translators as the interviews were linguistically demanding; the language did cause some problems not least because some of the interviews were more demanding in terms of a combination of interview length, concentration and disturbing factors. People were different to talk to, therefore, and some required more concentration than others. The length of an interview varied between 40 minutes and 2½ hours. Translators also interpreted to varying standards, as I only realised when I had returned home and transcribed the interviews. Fortunately, some Nepalis had satisfactory English leaving out the need for translators. Not rarely during the interview situation other people might come to see what was going on; this did not affect the

quality of the interviews because the Nepalis were used to having people around them, and no secrets appear to be kept for long in Nepal.

Planning to go to other places and districts, to meet with new people was stressful and hectic; however, I anticipated that kind of fieldwork challenge. There was one place where they were initially not welcoming, in terms of giving interviews. But I am confident I got what I came for in each place, a series of good interviews, and I set up good connections which I know as I have visited all the case areas later, even though I have not had opportunities to see all of the informants. Insiders helped me to find informants from the beginning especially the translators; but often I had to make special requests: for example an interview with a young woman, a male believer between 40-60 years old or a female church leader to even out the insiders' favouritism in picking certain informants of the local congregation.

My earlier time living in Nepal proved helpful during the fieldwork. Retrospectively, I do not know how I would have carried out this fieldwork without the help of my Nepali friends. Often they escorted and guided me from place to place, offered me room and board, gave me good ideas, lent me their internet, interacted with me, and arranged my arrivals in different places - and generally showed great interest in my research project.

At home I was left with, and this is an understatement, much work. There were thirty-five interviews, and they were all recorded in audio form and the quality was a challenge partly because of two of the translators' English and clarity of the recordings, and partly from various background noises in different places. It all combined to make some of the data difficult to decipher. In one place, I made a recording under a tin roof during the monsoon rain, an interview method I shall never want to repeat. All the

recorded data were on the computer and were waiting to be transcribed. It literally took months, and I did not have any specific equipment for that, only a laptop.

2.8.2 Protection of Data

The protection of data concerned me because the conditions in Nepal were challenging. During the monsoon, the heavy rain and moist climate usually cause defective conditions for electronic equipment; additionally, travelling requires robust equipment. Therefore, all data from camcorder, camera and digital recorder were copied onto my laptop. Having data in this way on two physical media gave a certain security. When I occasionally was online I uploaded as much data as time and internet-speed allowed to my personal website starting with the interviews then the photos of the informants. The videos could not be uploaded due to their size. It gave me good security to have interview data and stills located on my homepage in cyberspace secured with a password. I could then lose all my equipment, yet be able to recreate the main data from my homepage anywhere.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter explained the rationale for choosing Grounded Theory Analysis as the methodology. There are many other useful methodologies but this served my purpose in being useful and sufficiently independent of any preconceived ideas about cases and informants. GTA works out from the data to form categories and to generate theory, dealt with in the analyses (Chapters 4-7). The four study cases are useful in being different and by bridging many different groups in the church.

From Hiebert's model it became evident that an inculturation process keeps the core of the message, the Christian belief, but that there may be different ways of intervening

practically with the message which in a sense is a practical syncretism or perhaps even a practical synthesis of the Christian practice with the old traditions as part of the inculturation process. The discussion of synthesis and syncretism based on Hiebert's critical contextualisation model gave rise to applying the term syncretism in this thesis where needed.

Enquiring into the personal lives of people from other cultures to generate evidence of their social realities takes on the nature of a qualitative research project as opposed to a positivist data collection project or a postmodernist position. This qualitative research is demanding with regard to data validation and constant comparison is a good way to check data as analogous data segments are compared.

CHAPTER 3

3. History of the Nepali Church

This chapter gives an account in broad terms of the development of the Nepali church from its origins until the present. The Christian church of Nepal is a new church compared to many western traditional churches just as Nepal as a unified country is relatively new. Regarding the latter the first section is allocated to explain that, given its political and historical development, its religions, culture, many ethnic groups and castes and topography, Nepal is a complex country. This chapter describes the development of the Nepali church so that, later in the analyses chapters (Chapters 4-7), by locating Asha Church in its wider Nepali church context and its general national context, the challenges and contextual attempts to integrate individuals and case selections (Asha Churches) into the society can be identified.

The following issues will be dealt with in this chapter: it is important to demonstrate the Christian believers' commitment, devotion and enthusiasm for the Christian message and to describe their fellowship with their caste, (former) creed and culture. First, I outline a short political and historical development of the nation which is called Modern Nepal, (Section 3.1), then a historical view of the growth of Christianity in Nepal (Section 3.2). Then I delineate the more important Christian advances throughout the hundred years' of preparation time which took place primarily under the Rana rule, from 1870-1951 but which from a certain perspective continued until the mid-1970s, a combination of different pro-active aspects which all worked together to prepare the soil for Evangelical Christianity to be sown in Nepal (Section 3.3). I point to the significance of house fellowships as they were key factors to forming the Nepali church

as it looks today (Section 3.4). The Panchayat system of government and the Democratic system together comprise two strong Christian generational eras, the so-called first- and second generation Christianity respectively; both had their challenges and influence on the quality of the Christians' lives (Section 3.5). I include results from the primary empirical sources of the fieldwork where appropriate.

3.1 Overview of Modern Nepal

An examination of relevant literature portrays Nepal as an emerging Hindu country during the Thakuri period (750-1250 CE) among primarily traditional animistic and shamanistic tribal people of the Mongoloid race.¹⁰² I have found three historical markers representing three main historical periods mentioned by anthropologist Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka: 'a) the establishment of the Gorkhali empire up to the end of the Rana regime (1769-1950); b) the Panchayat period (1961-1990); and c) the [two] decade[s] following the restoration of Democracy in 1990,' see also Gellner's division of the same historical periods as patrimonial, guided and constitutional.¹⁰³

Nepal (as it looks today) in the 18th century consisted of four kingdoms: Malla Kingdoms (Kathmandu Valley), Chaubise Kingdoms (western kingdoms), Baise Kingdoms (far western kingdoms) and Kirant Kingdoms (eastern kingdoms, Figure 5).¹⁰⁴ As soon as the Gorkhali heir to the throne in Gorkha, Prithvi Narayan Shah, became king at twenty he was determined to conquer the Kathmandu Valley which by this time was ruled by three Malla kings in the small kingdoms of Kathmandu, Patan

¹⁰² Timeline, 2008; Holmberg, 1989, 23-24

¹⁰³ Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1997, 419-425; Pradhan, 2002, 5; Gellner, 2005, 761

¹⁰⁴ Aryal, 2005, 17

and Bhaktapur.¹⁰⁵ Ludwig F. Stiller explains how the Gorkhalis in three distinct phases, over a period of about twenty-five years, by cutting off supplies, trade and help from outside, could eventually enter and conquer the valley in 1765-1769. By the time the king died (1775) he was a ‘father of his country.’¹⁰⁶ The ‘Gorkha expansion or internal colonialism or territorial unification of Nepal’ was completed in subsequent years (1769-1795) by the conquest of east and west. Prithvi Narayan Shah is called the founder of Modern Nepal. Nepal was never colonised by a foreign power.¹⁰⁷

The Shah dynasty underwent a major change in 1843 when Jang Bahadur Kunwar Rana, a nephew of the Prime Minister, and a man who ingratiated himself with key people and eventually had the powers of an acting Prime Minister, usurped the position of Prime Minister following the so-called ‘Kot Massacre’ in 1846.¹⁰⁸ Many - but not all - details are clear, and Jang Bahadur appears to have played a major role in this massacre in which thirty-two members of the political elite (*bharadars*) and almost one hundred of the lower ranks died.¹⁰⁹ King Rajendra was kept under house arrest for the rest of his life, and the Crown Prince Surendra was appointed king but tightly controlled by Jang Bahadur. In 1847 Jang Bahadur had consolidated his power and was the ‘undisputed ruler of the country.’¹¹⁰ From this time on, the Rana successors were de facto rulers of Nepal despite the existence of a royal family. This arrangement lasted until 1951.

¹⁰⁵ ‘Bhaktapur’ is also known as ‘Bhadgaon’; ‘Patan’ is also known as ‘Lalitpur’

¹⁰⁶ Stiller, 1995, 85-107

¹⁰⁷ Bhattachan, 2008a, 14

¹⁰⁸ Landon, 1928, 119; Wright, 1877, 33; The Kot was an arsenal next to the king’s palace

¹⁰⁹ Wright, 1877, 35; Whelpton, 2007, 259; *Bharadar*: Courtier, member of the political elite serving king or Maharaja

¹¹⁰ Wright, 1877, 35

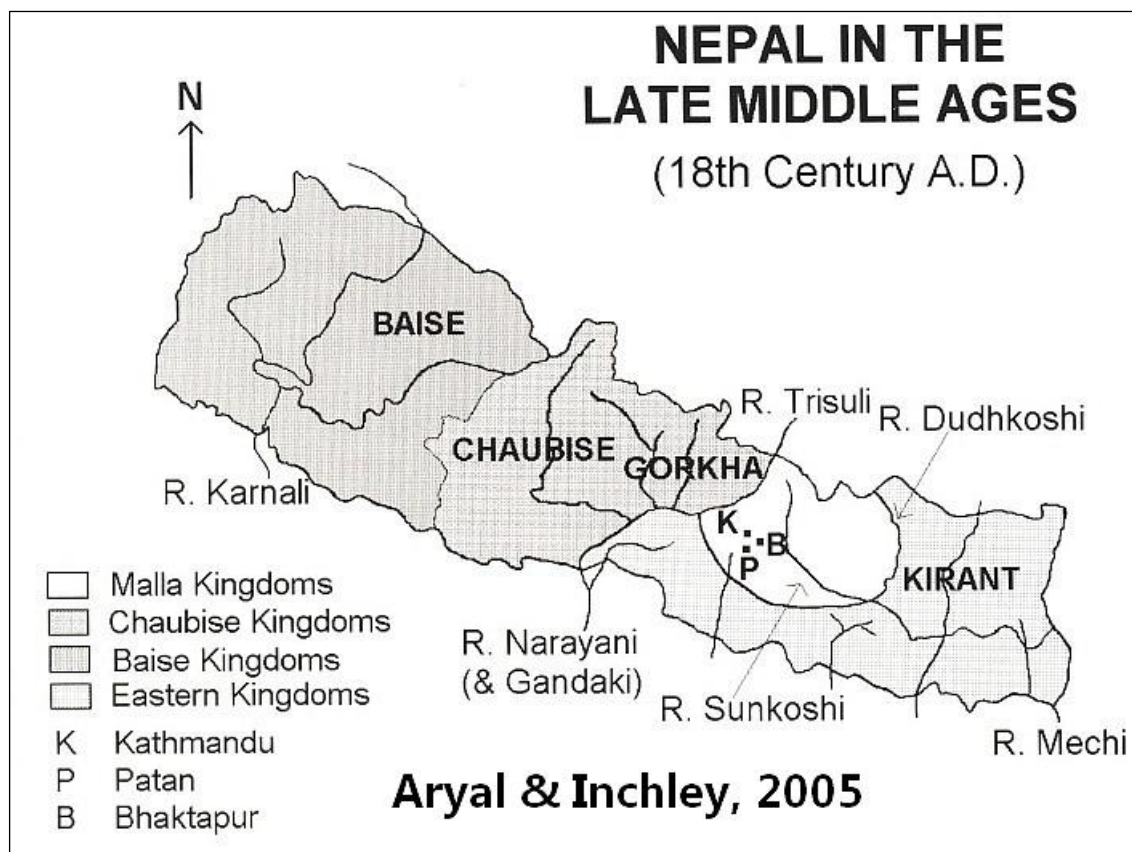


Figure 5: Four Kingdoms in the 18th Century

3.1.1 The Prime Ministers' Nepal, the 1854 Legal Code

Based on the significant issue of whether Nepal was only to be regarded as a conquered territory or whether a real sense of common unity prevailed, the 1854 legal code - putting the Gorkhali *Parbatiya* culture, including language and religion, at the centre - was promulgated.¹¹¹ The issue is relevant because the local societies positioned 'family, clan, village and ... caste' as central. Kathmandu, having been made the capital, was considered to be 'Nepal'. People away from the Kathmandu Valley considered themselves as subjects to the Gorkha king. Former kingdoms like Baise and Chaubise kingdoms and some of the Kirantis or the Eastern Kingdoms (Figure 5),

¹¹¹ Bhattachan, 2008b, 7-25; Pradhan, 2002, 1; 'The Nepali-speaking Bahun (Brahmin), Chhetri (Kshatriya) and Thakuri as well as the service caste Dalits' are collectively known as the *Parbatiya* people ('hill' people)

especially those located in the fringe of this young kingdom of Nepal, were naturally less attached to the Kathmandu Valley. Only in the beginning of the twentieth century was Nepal as a country named ‘Nepal’ by these people.¹¹² Nonetheless, uniting the kingdom of Nepal had given the Nepali armed forces strong ties which impressed the British and, according to William Hunter, the national spirit of the Nepali military personnel prevented domestic war in past times and, he asserted, would doubtless keep Nepal a war-free zone in the future.¹¹³ The first Gurkha regiments (a misspelling of Gorkha) were formed in 1763, and they joined together in the Anglo-Nepali War (1814-1816) and subsequently were recruited by the British (Section 3.3). Professional soldiers since that war the Gurkhas have since then been associated with admiration and pride, even today.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Whelpton, 2007, 55

¹¹³ Hunter, 1896, 156; Whelpton, 2007, 56

¹¹⁴ Christensen, 2001

The Caste Hierarchy of the Legal Code 1854 (<i>Muluki Ain</i>) – from András Höfer ¹²⁰	
1	Caste Group of the ‘Wearers of the Sacred Cord’ (<i>tagadhari</i>) Upadyaya Brahman Rajput (Thakuri) (‘warrior’) Jaisi Brahman Chhetri (‘warrior’) Dew Bhaju (Newar Brahmins) Indian Brahmin Ascetic sects (Sannyasi etc.) ‘Lower’ Jaisi Various Newar castes
2	Caste Group of the ‘Non-Enslavable Alcohol-Drinkers’ (<i>namasinya matwali</i>) Magar Gurung Sunuwar Some other Newar castes
3	Caste Group of the ‘Enslavable Alcohol-Drinkers’ (<i>masinya matwali</i>) Bhote (includes Tamang; Tibetanids ¹¹⁵ and some Tibetanoids ¹¹⁶) Chepang Kumal (potters) Hayu Tharu Gharti (descendants of freed slaves)
4	Impure, but ‘Touchable Castes’ (<i>pani nachalnya chhoi chhito halnunaparnya</i>) Kasai (Newar butchers) Kusle (Newar musicians) Hindu Dhobi (Newar washermen) Kulu (Newar tanners) Musulman Mlechchha (European)
5	Untouchable Castes (<i>pani nachalnya chhoi chhito halnuparnya</i>) Kami (blacksmiths) Sarki (tanners, shoemakers) Kadara (stemming from unions between Kami and Sarki) Damai (tailors and musicians) Gaine (minstrels) Badi (musicians) Pore (Newar skinnners and fishermen) Chyame (Newar scavengers)

Table 4: The Caste Groups of the Legal Code 1854 (*Muluki Ain*)

The Nepalese 1854 Legal Code (*Ain*) locates the socio-polity in accordance with the principles of Nepalese Hindu caste hierarchy. Hinduism drifted in from India but this new caste system differed from the Indian caste system.¹¹⁷ By registering all tribes in

¹¹⁵ Höfer, 2004, 117-120; Höfer tabulated as ‘Sherpa and other locals groups of Tibetan cultural and linguistic affiliation in the high mountains from Limi to Wallung’; Ramble, 1997, 391; Ramble explains the term ‘Tibetanid’: ‘perhaps the most useful term is Höfer’s “Tibetanid” which designates “groups being Lamaists or followers of the Bonpo religion and speaking a dialect closely related to High Tibetan.” He goes on to admit that it is a little awkward as it is not used much. This thesis, though, uses the term *Janajati* corresponding to tribal people (Section 2.7.2, p. 46)

¹¹⁶ Höfer, 2004, 118; Ramble, 1997, 391; From Höfer and Ramble, the Tibetanoids are primarily the Tamang, Lepcha, Thakali and Gurung

¹¹⁷ Khatri, 2007, 9

Nepal, including the Buddhists, within a Hindu caste system, Nepal became inherently Hindu and supported high-caste dominance.¹¹⁸ The Nepalese caste system was divided into two categories, 1) the pure castes who were called the ‘wearers of the sacred cord’ (*tagadhari*) and the ‘alcohol-drinkers’ (*matwali*), 2) and the impure castes who were called the ‘impure, but touchable castes’ (*pani nachalnya chhoi chhito halnunaparnya*) and ‘impure, but untouchable castes’ (*pani nachalnya chhoi chhito halnuparnya*). The alcohol-drinkers were in fact divided into two groups, the ‘non-enslavable alcohol-drinkers’ (*namasinya matwali*) and the ‘enslavable alcohol-drinkers’ (*masinya matwali*), depending on whether they could be punished by enslavement for certain offences.¹¹⁹ It is not only the *Parbatiya* who are placed in the caste hierarchy but groups from the whole of Nepal; even the Europeans are placed in this system among the impure castes in group 4, and the *Janajati* belong to the alcohol-drinkers in Groups 2 and 3, according to Höfer’s overview (Table 4).¹²⁰ This Legal Code was altered in 1963 when the rule of Panchayat was introduced, then the entire Constitution and Civil Law was abolished in 1991.

3.1.2 The Kings’ Nepal, the Panchayat System (1962-1990)

Early in the 1950s a long ban on international migration to and from the poverty-stricken landlocked kingdom of Nepal was withdrawn. The king was back in power after 105 years of Rana rule (1846-1951), and he introduced the first ever Democratic election. This period lasted ten years, then the government was dismantled and the king assumed absolute power. Nepal faced many typical majority world development

¹¹⁸ Hangen, 2007, 11-12

¹¹⁹ Höfer, 2004, 10

¹²⁰ Höfer, 2004, 9; Kunwor, 2009, 6

problems. Nepal joined the Colombo Plan (1957) with many donor countries.¹²¹ In addition, Japan offered to be the largest bilateral donor, and USA donations (USAID) resulted in a series of achievements in Nepal each decade. Christian mission expatriate groups arranged proposals of service programmes and recommended themselves to the government to work in Nepal; subsequently they were invited to help build up the country under certain restrictions.¹²² Also, Nepali-Indians whose ancestors had migrated to India and who had lived in India since the nineteenth century, of whom a minority had become Christians, returned to Nepal. In the following years a number of NGOs with a tremendous drive to build up the country arose, but the draw to a steadily stronger national Hinduism progressed and development was slow and inefficient.

In 1962, the kingdom was declared a 'Hindu kingdom', and the political Panchayat system was introduced by the king.¹²³ The Panchayat system was a hierarchical system (four-tier hierarchical system of assemblies) of democratically elected executive committees bridging the gap from the villages to the king.¹²⁴ The Panchayat system, although democratic, became largely a tool of Brahman domination.¹²⁵

¹²¹ Stewart, 2014; Explanation of the use of Majority World. Colombo, 1959; Donor Countries: The 'Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic Development in South and Southeast Asia': Nepal was granted scholarships and donor countries included Australia, Britain, Canada, India, Japan, New Zealand and the United States. The organisation's headquarters is in Colombo, Sri Lanka (Ceylon).

¹²² Lindell, 1979, 140; Kehrberg, 1999, 45

¹²³ Shaha, 1990, 5-6

¹²⁴ Congress, 1991; Adopted on the second anniversary of the royal coup, the new constitution of December 16, 1962, created a four-tier *Panchayat* system. At the local level, there were 4,000 village assemblies (*gaun sabha*) electing nine members of the village *Panchayat*, who in turn elected a mayor (*sabhapati*). Each village *panchayat* sent a member to sit on one of seventy-five district (*zilla*) *Panchayat*, representing from forty to seventy villages; one-third of the members of these assemblies were chosen by the town *Panchayat*. Members of the district *panchayat* elected representatives to fourteen zone assemblies (*anchal sabha*) functioning as electoral colleges for the National Panchayat, or Rashtriya Panchayat, in Kathmandu

¹²⁵ Whelpton, 2007, 180

The king was believed by some to be the incarnation of the god Vishnu.¹²⁶ According to Ramesh Khatri 'many simple Nepalis still regard their king as a god, though their educated counterparts would laugh at the idea.'¹²⁷ Although the king never claimed to actually be this incarnation, he was enigmatic about it. The rationale behind declaring an essentially Hindu state a 'Hindu kingdom' was to promote Hinduism at a time when it was noticed that the duty of the king to protect Hinduism was not being properly upheld. It was also a tacit confession that, after all, Nepal was to a degree multi-religious and multi-cultural. From this perspective, the government, which consisted of many high-caste Brahmins and Chhetris, promoted a national homogeneous culture.¹²⁸ Aggressive Panchayat signifiers in slogans such as: *Ek Bhasa, ek bhasha, ek desh* (One language, one form of dress, one country), transformed Nepal into a Hindu state in 1962.¹²⁹ A decade later, a new notion of 'a king as God among the people' introduced a 'harmonising diverse multi-lingual traditions into a single nationhood' programme, which in reality was a unifying religious education plan.¹³⁰ The government shaped the Nepalese Hindu identity in these and similar ways. A more coherent and structured pattern than existed in Nepal was advocated.¹³¹ It appears important that, although the government during the Panchayat era officially had dissociated itself from the 1854 code, it lingered socially among people and still persists even today (p. 105).¹³²

¹²⁶ Panchayat, 1991; 'To many of the unlettered citizens of the country, the king was a spiritual force as well, representing the god Vishnu upholding dharma on earth.' See also Khatri, 2007, 10

¹²⁷ Khatri, 2007, 10

¹²⁸ Khatri, 2007, 10

¹²⁹ Whelpton, 2005, 183

¹³⁰ Shaha, 1990, 83; Education Plan, 1971, No 1.4

¹³¹ Ghising, 2006, 8

¹³² Pradhan, 2002, 12

3.1.3 The Peoples' Nepal, the Democratic Era (1990-)

Meanwhile, a growing political demand gave rise to a fragile Democracy in 1990 and a Constitution was drawn up with equal rights that prohibited discrimination based on religion, race, caste or ethnicity. In 1996, the Maoists began a ten-year-long insurgency which only exacerbated the problems for the country and 13,000 people were killed.¹³³ The king was forced to abdicate on May 18, 2006 which marked the day when the kingdom of Nepal was made a secular state.¹³⁴ The two kings during the Democratic era became steadily weaker, but claiming that the power of the people through the Democratic process in that same period became stronger would be a fatal error to make. Rather, the country appears to have become fragmented with rules and regulations and practices and procedural issues only to be discussed at governmental level and ordinary people longing for a governmental orchestration of these issues the politicians were so eagerly talking about. For twenty years, twenty different governments have ruled the country.

Until 2006 Nepal was said to be a Hindu kingdom and was, and is still in 2015, claiming more than 80% of its population to be adherents of Hinduism. Locally, traditional religious families are tightly knit together, both socio-economically and religiously. Conversion of one person to Christianity causes a family to be strongly upset often with grave consequences both for the family members and for the converted member. 2008 was a transition from this constitutional monarchy to a republican,

¹³³ UNDP, 2003; According to the BBC News the Maoists are inspired ideologically by Mao Zedong but operate according to the methods of the 'Peru's Maoist Shining Path guerillas.' The 2008 general election was a victory for the Maoists; Khadka, 2007

¹³⁴ HoR, 2006; Nepal Declared Secular State: 'House of Representatives (HoR) made the following declaration stating the House of Representatives is sovereign for the exercise of all the rights until another constitutional arrangement is made to take the responsibility to gear ahead in the direction of full-fledged Democracy and make an end to the autocratic monarchy by institutionalising the achievements of the present peoples' movement, while safeguarding the achievements of the 1990 people's movement: ... 8. NEPAL SHALL BE A SECULAR STATE'

secular and federal state although with an interim constitution; it also abolished the Hindu dominated polity.¹³⁵ From having been almost exclusively extra-parliamentary in the 1990s, the Maoists had slowly gained respect in parliament but at the elections in 2013 they lost much influence in parliament. Over a period of twenty-five years (1990-2015), Nepal has changed rule of government from Panchayat to a Democratic republic and ended a 240 years' long kingdom. The huge parliament of 601 members presumably cuts back efficiency and the governmental focus on power, position and money is expected to reduce political competence, but the constitution was eventually finalised in September 2015.¹³⁶

3.2 Overview of Nepalese Christian History and Growth

Back in the eighteenth century, there was a government-accepted testimony of Jesus Christ in Nepal which lasted 54 years. It is difficult to understand this period partly because it left no lasting Christian impact in the country and partly because the type of Christianity they preached in no way ties in with later times' mainstream Nepalese Christianity. I am referring to two Capuchin friars who belonged to the Tibet Mission and came to the Kathmandu Valley in 1715 and established the first mission.¹³⁷ Kiran Kumar Das states: 'Although still considered a support to the Lhasa work, the Nepali station began to develop into a mission in its own right.' The friars stayed for 54 years but in 1769 they were expelled by King Prithvi Narayan Shah and left for Bettiah in India with 57 Newar Christian converts where the Capuchin Father Joseph Mary had

¹³⁵ Constitution, 2007

¹³⁶ Gellner, 2015

¹³⁷ This is the Order of Capuchin Friars Minor and goes back to 1525. They are strongly inspired by the writings of St. Francis of Assisi, and received early recognition, 1574, by the Papal Court

founded the Roman Catholic Bettiah Mission in 1745 according to S.J. Peter Tete.¹³⁸ The king treated the friars as traitors secretly working for the British.¹³⁹ The Capuchins are like a parenthesis in Nepal's history; even so, they deserve to be included in Nepalese church history for three reasons. First, the excluded group of people in 1769 may be - as Ivan Sada suggests - the first Christian community among the Nepali ethnic people. Secondly, the Capuchin friars went through the kind of sufferings that some of the Nepali Christians also had to go through two centuries later. The Capuchins went through illnesses, incidents of house robbing, they worked hard, there were court charges against them followed by prison sentences, mob anger, general dislike towards people belonging to another religion, and they were under suspicion of collaboration with the East India Company and consequently they had to flee as refugees after a lifetime in Nepal.¹⁴⁰ The third reason is that much of the history of Kathmandu Valley was recorded by the Capuchin friars during this time. Between the years 1786-1797, three different Fathers were sent to Kathmandu to maintain contact requested by Simha Pratap Shah, the king's son, following his death in 1775.¹⁴¹ These included Fr. Joseph of St. Marcello in 1786-1789, Fr. Charles Mary of Alatri from 1787-1788 and Fr. Romuald of Senigallia for nine months in 1794, whose conduct pleased Bahadur Shah. Fr. Joseph returned to Nepal from 1794-1810, and died in Kathmandu, 'the last Capuchin to pass into eternity in the valley of Nepal.'¹⁴² After 1769, there were no official missionaries, they only stayed as visitors.¹⁴³ In regard to this thesis they will not

¹³⁸ Tete, 1993, 30; Sada, 2013; Tamang, 2008, 66; Das, 2009; Stiller, 1995, 127; Das reports that the year 1628, almost 80 years earlier, marks the first recorded visit of any non-Asian to the Kathmandu Valley; it was a Jesuit priest of the south Tibet Mission on his return from Shigatse (Xigazê), Tibet, to Bengal, India. However, there is no evidence of any conversions during that time

¹³⁹ Tamang, 2012

¹⁴⁰ Lindell, 1979, 28

¹⁴¹ Perry, 2013, 20

¹⁴² Perry, 2013, 21; Vannini, 1981, 163

¹⁴³ Personal comment from Dr Cindy Perry; Gurung, 2008

be mentioned further as this study investigates the Nepali mainstream church which is Protestant and not Catholic.

From then on during the ‘Rana Regime’ until the revolution in 1951, there is almost no recorded evidence of a Christian presence in Nepal.¹⁴⁴ This revolution during the reign of King Tribhuvan which initiated a temporary Democratic epoch in which Nepal opened up to foreigners and the Panchayat rule from 1960-1990 covers a period of 40 years, during which time the church was founded in Nepal and grew, first slowly then quickly. It was consolidated with 25,000-50,000 evangelical believers around 1990 with a significant number of churches throughout the kingdom.¹⁴⁵ The subsequent Democratic time has been characterised by upheavals, governmental instability and curfews but has also been a time of Democratic freedom. Christians, particularly in the beginning, experienced difficulties but the church managed to grow to an estimated 400,000 in 2000.¹⁴⁶ The number is growing according to almost every Christian source but varies greatly; the most reliable ‘comprehensible survey of churches and Christians in Nepal was conducted by Nepal Research and Resource Network’, according to John Barclay. He asserts that in 2007 there were 2,799 churches and 274,462 baptised church members and 379,042 people attending church.¹⁴⁷ This figure should be compared with the official 2011 census figure which is 375,699. Nonetheless, many leaders claim that

¹⁴⁴ Gurung, 2008; Udi Jung Gurung writes: ‘Tir Bahadur D. Rai was one of the few who made several secret trips inside Nepal while Ranas were still in power. During the 1940s, he made trips to Dharan, Dhankuta, Chainpur, Bhojpur and the areas round about and preached in the bazaars and sold Christian books. In Dhankuta Bir Bahadur Rai was led to Christ through him. At present he is pastoring in a Church in Dharan. On the trip Tir Bahadur D. Rai was accompanied by an evangelist, Philip Gurung. And they did not get any opposition around Chainpur because the gospel was such a new thing to the people that most of them had not even heard of Jesus. From the Jogbani post, many were introduced to the gospel and reached out in different areas of Eastern Nepal even during the Rana period.’ There are other examples, like Ganga Prasad Pradhan etc.

¹⁴⁵ Enga, 2004, 61; Das, 2009; Barclay, 2006, 189 (estimates 40,000); Gaborieau, 2002, 98 (estimates between 25,000 and 35,000); Bhattachan, 2008a, 19 (indicates 31,280 in 1991)

¹⁴⁶ Reapsome, 2004; Kehrberg, 2000, 131

¹⁴⁷ Barclay, 2009, 189

this figure is unduly low, and the figure by 2010 is probably between half a million to one million baptised and non-baptised believers representing 2-4% of the total population inside Nepal.¹⁴⁸ These figures indicate that the average attendance at each church is 135 people which seems high, at least outside cities. In towns and cities like Kathmandu, Pokhara, Butwal, Nepalgunj etc. churches are expected to be bigger. In Kathmandu there are two churches which estimate their total numbers including branch churches at over 10,000 each, but it does not seem right that each single church - although probably bigger today than earlier - should be more than approximately 50 people taken at a national average despite the large size of some churches.

So how did Christianity come to Nepal after the transitory revolution in 1951 and during the Panchayat system of government? Throughout the Rana Rule and the beginning of that revolution there were a lot of Christian activities along the Indo-Nepal border just outside Nepal and in Sikkim, Darjeeling-Kalimpong and the Duars of West Bengal (the Duars acts as a gateway to Bhutan and the North-Eastern states of India), Assam and Bhutan.¹⁴⁹

3.3 Christianity Comes to Nepal - 100 Years of Preparation

Nepal never became a colony whereas India was a British colony from 1757-1947 (conventionally dated from the battle of Plassey, near Calcutta). However, since the Anglo-Nepali war (1814-1816), the British Government was in a position to take over His Majesty's Government of Nepal. Using the expression of a Peace Treaty for hill

¹⁴⁸ Das, 2009 est. 700,000 in 2009; Barclay refers to K. B. Rokaya who claims est. 800,000 in 2009

¹⁴⁹ Pratim, 2010

people, Gurkhas were permitted to enroll into the East India Company's Army and, by 1826, Gurkha regiments had been successfully deployed in battle. Although it was a bilateral agreement between the different soldiers and the British Government, the British used undercover methods to recruit the Nepalis because systematic recruiting into the British Army was disapproved of by the Nepalese Government. Families of recruited soldiers faced problems from the Nepalese Government to the point of harassment. After 1860, during the period of the second Rana prime minister of Nepal, things became easier. Suspecting this impediment for enrolled Nepali hill people in the British Army and to uphold a flow into the British Army, the British Government encouraged the Gorkha hill people to migrate to India. They established settlements for these families in areas like Bhagsu, Bakloh, Almora and Dehradun (west of Nepal) and Darjeeling and Shillong (east of Nepal). Later, it became even easier to recruit soldiers from the hills of Nepal. Alongside this, the British had tea gardens in North Bengal, particularly in Darjeeling, where the British had a great need for labour which furthered Nepalese migration to North Bengal. In this way, systematic settlements outside the Indo-Nepal border started, encouraged by the British Government through the army and the tea plantations.

In the wake of Indian colonisation, Christian missionaries came to India. Most well-known is the Baptist missionary William Carey who came when the trading company, the English East Indian Company (1600-1873), was influential and had trading posts in India. One trading post was in Calcutta, Bengal, where Carey came in 1793. At the turn of the century, other missionaries came from the Baptist Missionary Society.¹⁵⁰ The

¹⁵⁰ The Particular Baptist Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Amongst the Heathen was founded in 1792, subsequently known as the Baptist Missionary Society, BMS. Since 2000 it is known as BMS World Mission

East India Company was hostile to missionaries who meanwhile were welcomed to settle in the Danish colony of Serampore.¹⁵¹ Concerning Carey's work it was written, '... he and his pundits (Sanskrit scholars) translated the entire bible into India's major languages: Bengali, Oriya, Marathi, Hindi, Assamese, and Sanskrit and parts of 209 other languages and dialects.'¹⁵² In 1821, the New Testament was translated into Nepali.¹⁵³ A better and full copy of the bible was completed in 1914 with some revisions of the four gospels in 1921.¹⁵⁴

The real starting point for the propagation of evangelical Christianity to the Nepalis came when the Scottish missionary, William Macfarlane (1840-1887), came to Darjeeling in 1870 from the Church of Scotland. He started mission work in the vernacular among the local Nepalis, particularly among the Lepchas who were the indigenous people of Sikkim and North Bengal. In these areas they did not consider themselves as Nepalis. There were Christians before Macfarlane, such as the renowned Chandra Leela, but also some European clergymen and missionaries, particularly from the Baptist Missionary Society. There was even reportedly a church established for Lepchas in Darjeeling. Even so, the reason for calling it the real starting point is Macfarlane's attitude to mission. He founded the Darjeeling Mission in 1870 (later the Eastern Himalayan Mission, EHM), the Guild Mission, Kalimpong in 1873, and the Universities Mission, Sikkim, in 1886.¹⁵⁵ By the end of 1894 there were 2157 native baptised believers according to the Church of Scotland Yearbook 1896.¹⁵⁶ Macfarlane's emphasis was on education, Christian literature, bible translation, and village

¹⁵¹ 'Serampore' or 'Srirampur'

¹⁵² Galli, 2000, 246; A '*pundit*' or a '*pandit*' is a Hindu scholar in Sanskrit

¹⁵³ Serampore, 1821 (Digitalised version by Google); Gurung, 2008; Barclay, 2009, 189; Enga, 2004, 54; Lindell, 1979, 47

¹⁵⁴ Perry, 1997, 50 (p. 36)

¹⁵⁵ Perry, 1997, 42; Scott, 1928, 699

¹⁵⁶ Yearbook, 1896, 95

evangelism.¹⁵⁷ Macfarlane saw the need for literacy among the Nepalis, and established a great number of primary schools which became integrated into his ministry. Much attention could be paid to this visionary missionary. Perry writes that Macfarlane arrived in Darjeeling with ‘a well thought through agenda in mind. He had already determined that the Lepcha and Nepali ... were the most likely to respond to Christian preaching. He reasoned that everywhere should direct preaching in the vernacular be the primary missionary task.’¹⁵⁸ Less than ten years later, he wanted to ordain local Nepali-Lepcha Christians as they would be ‘more efficient both as Ministers of congregations and as Missionaries than any Europeans can be’ because they were ‘of the people themselves and knew the people as no European could know them’, according to Perry who refers to two EHM annual reports from 1877 and 1878.¹⁵⁹ In 1878, Macfarlane’s work was extensive and, on his request, two missionaries from Scotland, W. S. Sutherland and Archibald Turnbull (1855-1905), came to participate in the educational and religious work. They agreed to work in different parts of Darjeeling District, Turnbull in Darjeeling, Sutherland in Sikkim and Macfarlane in Kalimpong.¹⁶⁰

The two main mission posts were Darjeeling and Kalimpong, divided into two divisions in 1886. The divisions also formed the Eastern Himalayan Mission Council, a presbytery in the early days formed by seven Scottish male missionaries.¹⁶¹ Macfarlane who had settled in Kalimpong because of a better response to the Christian belief and the higher population of Lepchas, passed away in 1887. Over the decades from 1870-1890, particularly after Macfarlane’s death, more foreign missionaries came to join the

¹⁵⁷ Barclay, 2006, 189; Perry, 1997, 40-48

¹⁵⁸ Perry, 1997, 40

¹⁵⁹ Perry, 1997, 43, 72 (endnote 29)

¹⁶⁰ Yomten, 2012

¹⁶¹ Graham, 1897, 142: Dr. Ponder, Mr. Kilgour, Mr. Macara, Mr. Graham, Mr. Turnbull, Mr. Sutherland and Mr Mackenzie (the Mission Council/EHMC)

Darjeeling Mission (EHM). The Foreign Mission Committee ran the work in Darjeeling and a new missionary, John Anderson Graham, (1861-1942) from The Young Men's Guild Mission, concentrated on the church work in Kalimpong, whereas Sutherland ran the educational work.¹⁶² The work of EHM developed from Darjeeling into Kalimpong, Kurseong, the low-lying Terai and Sikkim, and towards the change of the century the work spread in Bengal along the Indo-Bhutanese border towards Assam and Siliguri. The Scottish Universities' Mission was responsible for Sikkim. The Teacher Training Institute in Darjeeling transferred to Kalimpong in 1887 and became The Scottish Universities' Missions Institution (SUMI) where Sutherland also moved. He was later succeeded by John Macara (1870-?) in 1899-1902 (Figure 6).¹⁶³ Sutherland came back again and served until 1920 (1887-1899 and 1908-1920). All along, native Lepcha and Nepali churches were being consolidated in Darjeeling District, just as foreign missions also emerged such as the Ladies Zenana Mission & Medical Mission (later BMMF and now Interserve).¹⁶⁴

3.3.1 Gorkha Mission and Nepal Border Fellowship

Ganga Prasad Pradhan (1853-1932), who was a Newar, joined Macfarlane's educational system from the age of ten. He was converted and became the first Nepali pastor and

¹⁶² Barclay, 2003. Barclay writes that, 'Around 1869 the Church of Scotland started its religious and charitable trust in the province of Bengal. The Foreign Mission Committee of the Church of Scotland sent its missionaries to India and finally in the areas of Eastern Himalayas.'; The Scottish Universities Missions Association had placed their educational centre, S.U.M., in Kalimpong. Macfarlane was a SUMI missionary from 1886-1887, John Macara was a SUMI missionary from 1899-1902

¹⁶³ Lepcha, 2006; Yomten, 2012; Macara, 2011; Yearbook, 1896, 95. According to Yomten (SUMI's editor) and Scottish Yearbook 1896 the Rev. John Macara did serve in Scottish Universities Mission 1892-1902. Perry, personal notes 2015: SUMI trained both teachers and catechists. 'SUMI Opened in Kalimpong with 12 students in April 1887 by Sutherland, and by end of year had 36 students, 14 for SUM work in Sikkim, 13 for Darjeeling and 9 for Kalimpong'

¹⁶⁴ BMS, 2013. From this document: 'Hindu women, particularly from the wealthier classes, were secluded in zenanas – private apartments for female family members. No men apart from those in the family were allowed in, and no female family member beyond the age of childhood was allowed out unguarded.

With very little contact with the outside world, these women were denied any education or training in crafts, and were left to care for the family'

bible translator. Ganga Prasad Pradhan was the primary ethnic Nepali translator but did not work single-handedly but alongside Rev. Turnbull who came to Darjeeling from 1879-1898 followed by Rev. Robert Kilgour who was in Darjeeling from 1897-1914. Ganga Prasad favoured colloquial Nepali and finished the entire bible in 1914 with some corrections in 1921. He became a legend among the Christian Nepalis.¹⁶⁵ Ganga Prasad Pradhan with his big family tried to immigrate to his native Kathmandu in 1914 as Christians but they were exiled back to India by the Nepalese authorities.¹⁶⁶ G. P. Pradhan was strongly involved in the establishment of the Gorkha Mission in 1892, which was the native mission of the EHMC in Darjeeling, with its long-term focus to preach the bible message in Nepal.¹⁶⁷ In 1901 Buddhi Singh was appointed to ministry within the Gorkha Mission, his outpost was at Sukhia Pokhari and evangelised Nepalis who crossed the border.¹⁶⁸ There were a number of other mission posts along the border in the first half of the twentieth century (in towns like Jogbani, Muzaffarpur, Ghorasahan, Raxaul, Nautanwa, Gorakhpur, Rupaidiha, Tanakpur, Pithoragarh and Dharchula) where missionaries had stationed and set up dispensaries (Map 2).¹⁶⁹ Nepali workers including Gorkha Mission workers were associated with these mission posts with missionaries as the dispensaries at these places which served as significant stations and gateways to Nepal, see Udi Gurung.¹⁷⁰ Some of these missions, among many others, were WEC, AG, NEB, RMM and RBMU, see map in Perry.¹⁷¹

The missionaries stationed mission posts all along the Indo-Nepal border (on the Indian side). Nepali believers and Darjeeling evangelists like Nawalbir James Rai, David

¹⁶⁵ Whelpton, 2007, 168 ; Perry, personal notes 2015

¹⁶⁶ Perry, 1997, 50

¹⁶⁷ Das, 2009; EHMC: Eastern Himalayan Mission Council

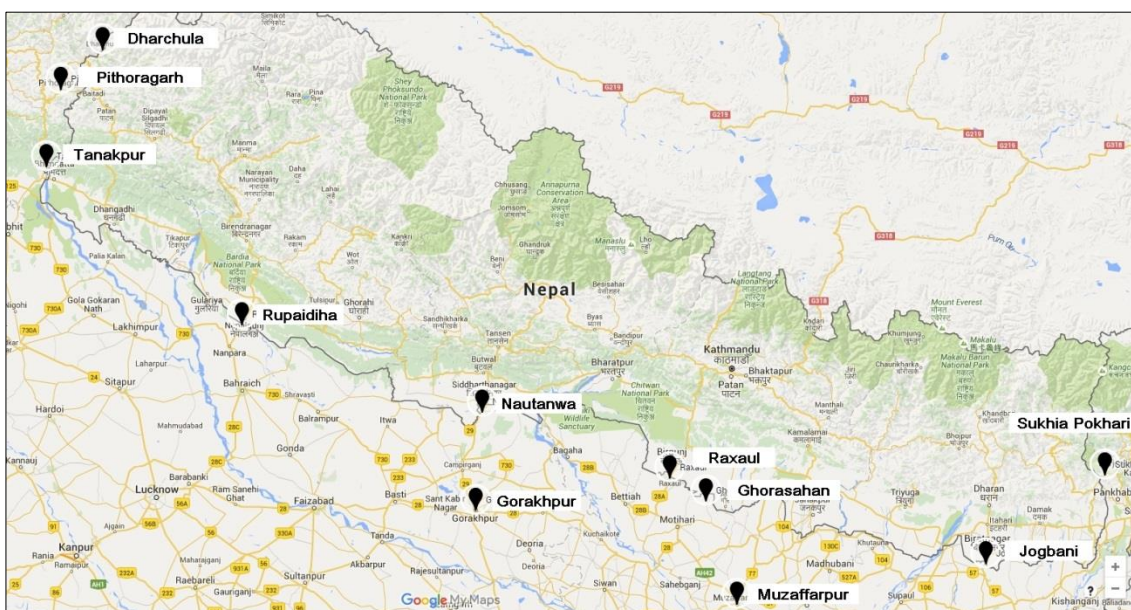
¹⁶⁸ Barclay, 2009, 190; Perry, 1990, 39-40

¹⁶⁹ Gurung, 2008;

¹⁷⁰ Gurung, 2008

¹⁷¹ Perry, 1990; Map: Main points of penetration of the Gospel into Nepal – pre 1950

Mukhia and Barnabas Rai and other evangelists presented Christianity with great passion from these mission posts.¹⁷² From the posts, Nepali evangelists took opportunities to propagate the Christian belief to Nepalis who were coming and going to Nepal so Nepali migrant workers were converted to Jesus Christ.¹⁷³ Most of the mission posts were offering medical help and/or educational service to the Nepalis crossing the border as this was not available within Nepal at that time but the priority was to preach.¹⁷⁴



Map 2: Indo-Nepal Border (Mission Posts Focusing on Nepal before 1950) ¹⁷⁵

The mission appears to have existed after 1920 but there is not much information available about the Gorkha Mission after 1920. Raxaul continued to receive Nepalis at

¹⁷² Perry, 1990, 41-43: Nawalbir James Rai; Perry, 1990, 78-82: Barnabas Rai; Perry, 1990, 82-90: David Mukhia

¹⁷³ Das, 2009

¹⁷⁴ Yearbook, 1896, 95; Barclay, 2009, 190; Gurung, 2008

¹⁷⁵ Google Maps (2015); Nepal, Gorkha Mission Posts, (Loaded on 29 December 2015), https://www.google.dk/maps/@27.9817279,82.9716323,7z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m2!6m1!1szDUJXD7VG3JQ.k_12Njwi0Y4s; scale undetermined.

least until 1929.¹⁷⁶ However, other foreign mission interests built up different strategic places alongside some of the same towns as the Gorkha Mission and formed strongholds for the coming influx of Christianity to Nepal. Most of them were under the Nepal Border Fellowship which was a confederation of ten different missions and missionaries from various points along the border of Nepal with India, it had its first conference in 1933.¹⁷⁷ They met for prayer annually. Nautanwa became important both for evangelism and as a gateway to Butwal, Pokhara and the entire Gandaki zone.

3.3.2 Kalimpong-Darjeeling were reaching out for Nepal and Bhutan

There were five main geographical areas where the work took place and from where it proliferated: Darjeeling, Kurseong and the low-lying terai, Kalimpong, the Duars towards Assam along the Indo-Bhutan border, and Sikkim.¹⁷⁸ The two divisions Darjeeling and Kalimpong were, until mid-1950, the chief bases. Darjeeling was a town with cosmopolitan leanings, where many Europeans came to relax giving Darjeeling a broad-based and sophisticated touch as opposed to Kalimpong which, although not that far away, was still relatively remote and where all communication was in the vernacular which primarily was Nepali and Lepcha.¹⁷⁹ Even though there were many Nepali strain people represented in North Bengal such as Lepcha, Newar, Brahmin, Tamang, Rai, Limbu etc. in addition to the Bhutanese people and the many Indian peoples and castes who lived in the region, the Nepali language (Khas) became the *lingua franca* in

¹⁷⁶ Perry, personal notes, Last reference: Mission News, Feb. p.13, G.M. worker to help Raxaul Medical Mission (RMM) at end of year

¹⁷⁷ Perry, 1997, 317; Hagen, 2006, 33; Alma Hagen writes concerning an NBF conference in 1952 that people 'representing Lutherans, Presbyterans, Baptists, and Pentecostals' came from Nepal's western, eastern, and southern borders.

¹⁷⁸ Perry, 1997, 44

¹⁷⁹ Perry, 1997, 47

Kalimpong.¹⁸⁰ It is considered to have been of great advantage for the Christians in Kalimpong to have been able to work in the vernacular among the local people. J. A. Graham, who ran the division in Kalimpong, was active and capable of turning Kalimpong into a Christian power centre. In the introduction to Graham's book C. A. Elliott writes:

In the course of these years I became fairly intimate with the Missionary body and with some of the native Christians. I knew their difficulties and discouragements as well as their joys and successes, and I can bear witness without hesitation to the accuracy of the picture drawn by Mr. Graham, and the blessing which has rested on the Mission at Kalimpong ... Turning to the more definitely religious side, the missionaries have been unusually successful in converting the simple tribes from their animistic or Buddhistic beliefs to the Christian faith. Of the quality of the Christians Mr Graham speaks with complete candour; there are men and women of all sorts ...¹⁸¹

Graham was a head of the Darjeeling division for fifty years from 1902. In addition, Kurseong became a mission centre in the vernacular particularly after G. S. Mill moved there in 1926 as SUMI Principal 1927-1941. Darjeeling was certainly also a Christian power centre but from another perspective. They were involved in bible translation, the educational level was higher and the cosmopolitan touch caused education, published material, and communication to be in Hindi, Bengali, Nepali and English instead of in Nepali and Lepcha only. So, when it is believed that the situation was better in Kalimpong, it is from the perspective of reaching out in the colloquial dialect where the pastoral work and the biblical understanding had better conditions.

¹⁸⁰ Lepcha was the *lingua franca* when Macfarlane arrived, but the whole ethnic composition was rapidly changing as Nepalis immigrated throughout Sikkim and N Bengal and on into Bhutan and NEI - so that Nepali became the *lingua franca* in Kalimpong (Perry, personal notes). The seven sister states of North East India (NEI) are: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura

¹⁸¹ Graham, 1897, viii

For the first twenty-five years until the beginning of the twentieth century, there were efforts to reach out to the two closed countries, Nepal and Bhutan. These advances were carried out by the Nepali-Lepcha Christians. Both Kalimpong and Darjeeling resident preachers had established a separate field and missions in Sikkim (Figure 6).¹⁸²

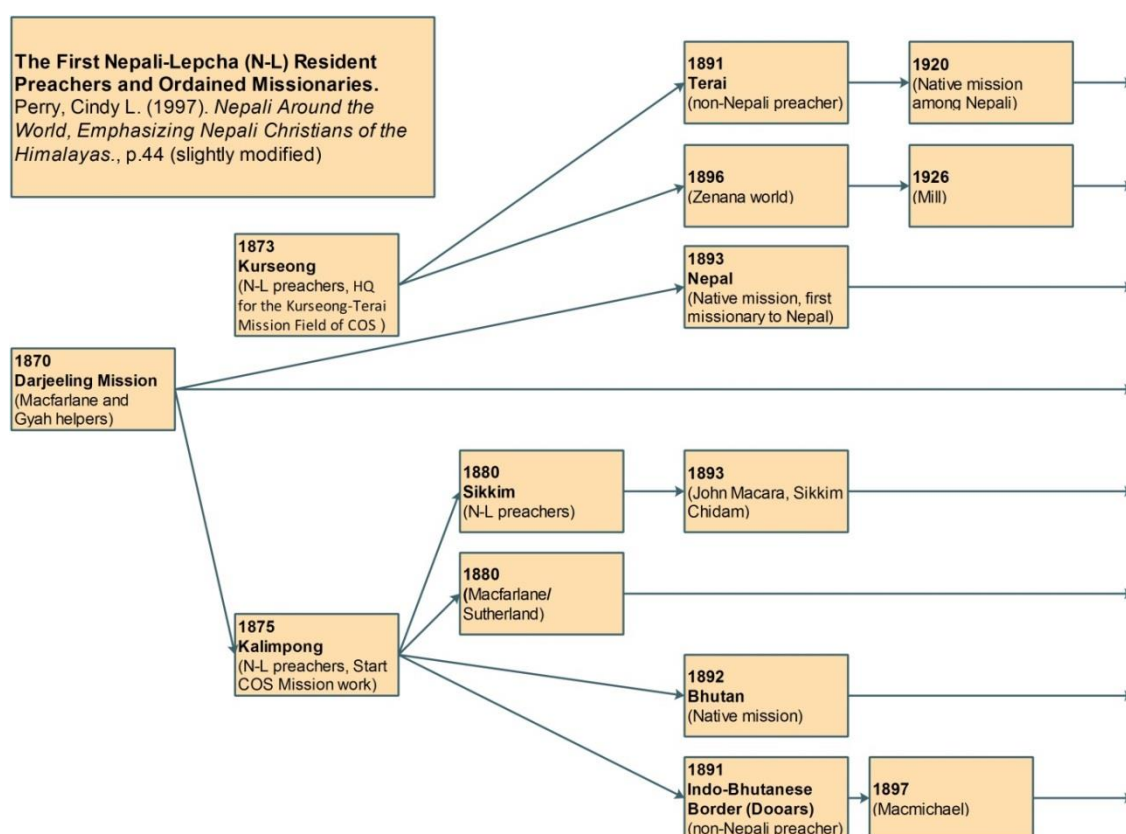


Figure 6: Expansion of EHM's Preaching Ministry

Even though the first fifty years of EHM (1870-1920) were productive and the church and mission expanded all along the Indo-Nepal border, into Sikkim, Bhutan and the Duars, the early missions in Kalimpong-Darjeeling and along the border were normative and in accordance with their era in terms of attitude to the native people.

¹⁸² Gyah helpers came from the city of Gyah in Bihar, COS meaning Church of Scotland, N-L abbreviation for Nepali-Lepcha preachers, HQ means headquarters. Kurseong, which was not directly connected to Darjeeling in 1870-1873 was established as the HQ for the Kurseong-Terai Mission Field of COS and it was a series of Scottish women missionaries who started schools in that area, the first Kurseong baptism was recorded as early as 1877, according to Perry (personal notes).

After WWII, missionaries came who broke with that norm and established closer and more equal working relationships.

The early-generation Christians of the time (1870-1920) who began with Macfarlane/Pradhan had died out by the 1920s (see the development in Figure 6). The Scottish Mission related Eastern Himalayan Presbytery (later called Eastern Himalayan Church Council/EHCC), which had joined the Presbyterian Church of India when it was formed in 1905, was later united with other Indian churches in 1924 as a new denomination called the United Church of North India/UCNI.¹⁸³ For more details of EHM and EHCC and their relation to early Scottish mission work and UCNI formation, see Perry.¹⁸⁴ Kirk Sessions were bodies under EHCC consisting of groups of churches of a specific region which decentralised power, responsibility and function.¹⁸⁵ EHCC was a solid church council which maintained ecclesiastical matters and was not much involved in local mission, and it did not adhere to the seemingly more cultural mission approach that Macfarlane had championed. India was a British colony, and the Church of England and the Church of Scotland came primarily to pastor their own people except for the missionaries who reached out to the native people, the Nepalis, who in great numbers were working as migrant workers in the tea gardens in North Bengal and other places in other employment. Over the years, mission grew slowly in Sikkim and in the lower-Terai, even in Calcutta and other places.

In the following quarter century, from 1920, the work stagnated. Darjeeling, a city greatly involved in Christian activities became the place where Christian material was

¹⁸³ Perry, notes

¹⁸⁴ Perry, 1997, 46

¹⁸⁵ UCNI, 2012

produced in great numbers but in spite of this growth among the local Nepalis was not able to be maintained and a fall in the number of native Christians was experienced.

3.3.3 Preparing for Moving In

There were a few significant Indian preachers and missionaries who reached Darjeeling. For a comprehensive list of people who were involved in Nepal Church history, ‘The AdHoc Image and Text Database on the History of Christianity’ produced by Yale University, is available (a selection is listed in Appendix B).¹⁸⁶ Arrivals of missionaries like Jonathan Lindell and Elizabeth Franklin from the 1940s who learned Nepali, while some also started courses in their private homes for the Nepali people - this was the first time that missionaries had allowed native people inside their houses - inspired ‘a continuing revitalization of the EHCC churches, especially among the young people’, according to Perry.¹⁸⁷ This took Macfarlane’s informal and friendly approach even further. In this way, these missionaries had assessed their approach to the native people and thus had a far more welcoming attitude to the national people. The quarter century from 1920 to just after WWII, which was characterised by a lack of progress, began to change with some of these missionaries who went against the normative mission practice. The missionaries, inclusive of the Indian missionaries, motivated EHCC churches to take up their responsibility, and these arriving missionaries came from different perspectives. Even so, they came with the agreement of the Scottish Mission and by and large submitted to EHCC rules.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ Hoc, 2010

¹⁸⁷ EHCC: Eastern Himalayan Church Council, headquarters in Darjeeling; Perry, 1997, 59-60

¹⁸⁸ Perry, 1997, 59

The Darjeeling Hills Bible School (established in 1954 by Roy Hagen) recruited and trained a significant number of Darjeeling-Kalimpong Nepalis and Lepchas to go into Nepal. The first team went to Tansen in 1956. Although there were some splinter groups from EHCC churches instigated by the missionaries primarily from Pentecostal missions, a common attitude and approach between the churches and missions to reaching inland Nepal and a streamlining of the increasing number of denominations - as they worked under EHCC rules - helped to obtain this high purpose. Cindy Perry recounts an interesting and important note from EPMC minutes from 1948 regarding Elizabeth Franklin (RBMU) who became a central figure in renewing the mission in Darjeeling District (Kalimpong).¹⁸⁹ She went to Nepal with the Bhaktapur team in 1956.¹⁹⁰ She was a key person in developing and recruiting people for Nepal (Table 5).

Denominational Loyalties
In view of the assurances given by Miss Franklin to the Kalimpong local Kirk Session that no interference will be made with the denominational loyalties of students and that there will be no controversial treatment of any Christian doctrine, particularly that of baptism, it was agreed that council give approval to the carrying on of this school in Kalimpong by Miss Franklin.

Table 5: Denominational Loyalties (Elizabeth Franklin and EHCC) ¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ EPMC: Eastern Himalayan Mission Council; Elizabeth Franklin, who was with Regions Beyond Missionary Union (RBMU) was a serious woman. She prayed for twenty-three years before entering Nepal, and was one of the first missionaries to open her home to the native people. She was not into the normative mission of the era yet submitting to EHCC

¹⁹⁰ Hoc, 2010; From the Yale Divinity Digital Image & Text Library in the AdHoc Image & Text Database on the History of Christianity. The team which went to Bhaktapur from Kalimpong are: Prakash Rai, Daftan Sada, Elizabeth Franklin, Daniel Sittling, Robert Karthak, Rajendra Rongong; Deoki Khawas, Dhanmaya Khawas, Ajamit Khartak, Jeremit Rongong with Sharon (her child); Druba and Shanti Khawas (two children).

¹⁹¹ Kirk Session: Presbyterian Elders make decisions for the parishes through elected church councils, or Kirk Sessions; Perry, 1997, 59-60

This notion of respecting the work of others which developed between the primary missionaries and missions located all along the Indo-Nepal border in the south and in North Bengal for the sake of the more important issues of educating and recruiting the Nepalis became one of the core values of the upcoming in-Nepal based work. Theological topics like infant baptism versus faith baptism, speaking or not-speaking in tongues, ecclesiastical structures, forms and educational background were all – without idealising too much along this trajectory – toned down for this more important purpose. This reveals the conditions for some of the informal missionaries but also their flexibility and willingness to be in agreement with EHCC. Later in Nepal the church had a charismatic form different from the Presbyterian.

The British missionary, Ernest Oliver (1911-2001), was a key player in harmonising the different denominations into an agreement, preparing them to go into Nepal with United Mission to Nepal (UMN). He was based in Motihari where he had interdenominational experience with the Nepal Border Fellowship (NBF). Richard Tiplady writes that Oliver made several visits to Kathmandu where he had meetings with the British ambassador and the head of the American trade mission who, as Christians, advocated the need for Christian mission work in Nepal. Oliver had the foresight to forge the following statement based on his desire to see God move the churches to grow from Nepalese roots: ‘We (different mission agencies and churches) determined that we would not engage in any sort of church order – no Anglicans, or anything like that – because this

church (the Nepali) had to have liberty in the Spirit to find something suitable to the place.¹⁹² Oliver was passionate about having fully indigenised churches.¹⁹³

This concern of Oliver's came into being at the following event a few years later in Kathmandu in the fifties when the Kalimpong group prepared to build their church. It is clear that at least some groups among those of the Nepali missionaries who may originally have been descendants of migrants into India, after having been allowed back into Nepal after 1951, had long and thorough thoughts and reflections about how to get on with the work of sharing Christ and establishing churches. Norma Kehrberg writes about two particular groups who met and discussed church building, the Bhaktapur team who reached Nepal in 1956 (see footnote 190) and an Indian group from Kerala, an old Episcopal church, allegedly founded by the apostle Thomas (Mar Thoma Church) who started to have regular fellowships in Colonel Nara Raj Shamsher Jung Bahadur Rana's home in 1953 and became a congregation later that year. Colonel Nara Raj, or Colonel Sahib, was strongly involved in the revision of bible translation in 1977.¹⁹⁴

Kehrberg says that 'the church (general Nepali) also made a conscious decision to worship in an eastern style,' and she explains how the two groups and other Christian Nepalis, inclusive of expatriate missionaries, had much theological discussion and wrestling with practical issues in the valley of Kathmandu about making a fully

¹⁹² Lewis-Khanna, 2013; 'Department of Commerce trade missions are overseas programmes for U.S. firms that want to explore and pursue export opportunities by meeting directly with potential clients in their markets.'; Tiplady, 2005

¹⁹³ Tiplady, 2005; 'Indigenise' is a term used by Tiplady. It is not a bad term but will not as such be used in this thesis because its meaning is subjugated to the use of different researchers

¹⁹⁴ Barclay, 2009, 190; Colonel Nara Raj Shamsher JBR was a member of the Rana aristocracy. After a meeting with Ernest Oliver at Duncan Hospital in Raxaul he became a secret believer and instrumental in establishing the Putali Sadak church

indigenous autonomous church, although they faced many challenges.¹⁹⁵ Clearly, some Nepalis made it a priority to establish a genuine Nepali church with Nepalese values, a church embedded into the Nepali cultural daily life. Many Christians migrated back into Nepal after 1951 but not as many as is often supposed. In fact, there were only approximately a hundred converts in 1960 and about 2000 Christian Nepalis in Nepal two decades after the beginning of the migration into Nepal, in the 1970s.¹⁹⁶ This is why the preparation time has been estimated as a hundred years in this thesis. Only after 1970 did Christianity get off the ground more convincingly with considerably more converts in Nepal, and a more significant spread of Christian churches.¹⁹⁷

During the first decade 1951-1960 there were three main areas where churches developed, Pokhara, Nepalgunj and Kathmandu.¹⁹⁸ The eight churches in Table 6 began during this first decade in Nepal:¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁵ Kehrberg, 2000, 100; Eastern style meaning: ‘removing one’s shoes and sitting on the floor with men and women seated on opposite sides; not using pews as already adopted in parts of India, their former home’

¹⁹⁶ Gellner, 2012, 58; According to H. Gurung’s census table there were 458 Christians in 1961 and 3898 Christians in 1981

¹⁹⁷ Perry, 1997, 70

¹⁹⁸ Sharma, 2010, 121; Perry, 1993, 96; Pickett, 2002

¹⁹⁹ The pastors in brackets were the pastors at the time of establishment. Only Ps. Robert Khartak is still acting as pastor today (2015)

First Eight Churches in Nepal

I.	1952: Ramghat Church, Pokhara (Ps David Mukhia)
II.	1953: Putali Sadak Church, Putali Sadak (Col. Nara Raj Shumsher JBR) ²⁰⁰
III.	1954: AG Nepali Fellowship, Nepalgunj (Ps Barnabas Rai) ²⁰¹
IV.	1954: Bhaktapur Church (Ps Tir Bahadur Dewan)
V.	1957: Nepali Isai Mandali, Dilli Bazaar, Kathmandu (Ps Robert Khartak) ²⁰²
VI.	1957: Butwal (The Mathai's of the National Missionary Society of India)
VII.	1959: Amp Pipal (UMN project, pharmacy started 1957, church in 1959)
VIII.	1960: Tansen Church, Bhagawati Tol, Tansen (Ps Prem Pradhan) ²⁰³

Table 6: First Eight Churches (1951-1960)

Two comments are in order about this list. First, the years of establishment of the churches should not be taken too literally because the establishing of churches is a process which for some may have already started as house fellowships (*gharelusangati*) back in India or as house fellowships when coming to Nepal some months or even years before they were actually denoted as churches. However, most secondary sources agree on these years for the establishment of the churches. Second, according to Professor Rongong, who was part of the Bhaktapur team, Nepali Christians in Pokhara were regarded as *videshis*, foreigners, in the same way as foreign missionaries were, due to their alien faith.²⁰⁴ Ramghat Church in Pokhara was established when the Nepal Evangelistic Band (NEB) team of fifteen Nepalis and expatriate missionaries came from

²⁰⁰ It is now called 'Beth Shalom Putali Sadak Church'; C.G. George was the first recognised pastor as he was ordained in 1956 but the church existed already from 1953 under the leadership of Col Shumsher JBR.

²⁰¹ Since 1953 Barnabas Rai and John Singh worked together from Nepalganj in a rented house; baptisms were done in Nanpara. Perry states that they moved between Nanpara and Nepalganj alternating two weeks in each place with their families because they had no permanent accommodation in Nepalganj. In 1954 when a Nepalganj family was baptised, a new church was possible

²⁰² This church was originally more widely known as 'Gyaneshwar Church' but now popularly known as its original name, Nepal Isai Mandali or just NIM

²⁰³ Perry, personal notes: Friedericks moved to Tansen and started a UMN dispensary in 1954. Services started from 1956 in the hospital. The Nepalis were evangelising. Prem Pradhan took over leadership from 1959-1960

²⁰⁴ Rongong, 2012, 60

Nautanwa in 1952. The church founders of Ramghat Church had agreed on a set of guidelines which helped them be accepted when they talked with people and guidelines also served as the foundation of the Nepali Isai Mandali (Table 7).

Guidelines of two Influential Churches Ramghat Church and Nepali Isai Mandali (Gyaneshwar Church)	
Guidelines for Ramghat Church, Pokhara	
1a	Church leadership was in the hands of the Nepalis.
1b	The church and the mission worked as separate entities, although they were related.
1c	The mission provided jobs for Nepali Christians in their different work areas.
Guidelines for Nepali Isai Mandali, Gyaneshwar (KTM)	
2a	The church would be interdenominational, because members had come from different denominational backgrounds, Gal.3:28, "All one in Christ..." was to be the foundation of the church. ¹
2b	The church and mission would remain separate. Christian workers and expatriates would participate in the church as members.
2c	The church would give preference to believer's baptism.
2d	Western practices in the form of observation of the sacraments would be replaced by more acceptable rites suited to the local culture.
2e	The salary of the pastor and full time workers of the church would be borne by the church.
2f	Church leadership would be in the hands of Nepalis, as far as possible.
2g	The future nature of the church would be decided after the church had a sufficient number of local members.

Table 7: Guidelines for the Nepali Church

The church founders from Nepali Isai Mandali came from Kalimpong and were naturally much influenced by the ecclesiastical denomination of EHCC. These people, however, were evangelists and missionaries more than church people for which reason it is interesting to observe the points 2b, 2c, 2d & 2e of the guidelines together with point 1b (Table 7). The preference for believer's baptism, point 2c, seems to signify a desire for genuine conversions. Pastor Robert Karthak's (Nepali Isai Mandali) own

adult Pentecostal experience in 1968, under the influence of American evangelical missionaries, signified a new theological approach and consequently another church practice. This attitude which was different from EHCC procedure (Presbyterian) caused him to be excommunicated from his home church in Kalimpong (Macfarlane Memorial Church), according to Gibson and Perry.²⁰⁵ The approach to church life had become more distinct Nepali (Table 5). Nepal Isai Mandali was a charismatic church and has, as have the vast majority of Protestant churches in Nepal, practised believers' baptisms. There is an emerging debate among a small group of Protestants concerning sprinkling of water versus full immersion in water particularly from the side of the Presbyterians.

The entire spirit of the two sets of guidelines (Table 7) signals an enervation and a frustration in a people having been in a culture foreign to their own affecting their core values in a number of ways. Therefore, the Nepalis wanted to build their own church away from the western church traditions of the execution of sacraments, western choir and music styles, the church organ, clerical collars, pews, devotionals, architecture, all ways of worship not in line with Nepalese custom and style. The foreign church did not attract the Nepalis and did not attach itself to the Nepalese culture in Nepal. Although the Nepali Christians already had house fellowships and churches, they feared the influence of Darjeeling-Kalimpong foreign culture in Nepal from the outset, hence these guidelines from the two early churches in Pokhara and Kathmandu, still remembering that there were foreign influences who felt strongly about the establishment of an indigenous church, such as Ernest Oliver and NBF, and the NEB (later INF). Other guidelines in that same spirit were devised by other fellowships. However, this does not mean that major parts of the theological understanding were not easily adaptable into

²⁰⁵ Gibson, 2014, 111; Perry, 2015, personal notes

the Nepalese culture since both the Episcopal Indian church from Kerala and other conservative churches in UMN areas where Christian Nepalis were employed, in addition to the very popular Pentecostal-oriented churches, were among the first churches.

Point 2e signals their commitment to a genuine Nepali church. Support should not be a steady and easily-available influx of money from the outside to the church. Finally, it must be added that, although the NEB team came in as a mixed Nepali and foreign group, only a few years later the Nepalis moved to Ramghat away from the NEB compound to build their church by themselves - intentionally separate from the missionaries.

These terms and guidelines are not insignificant with the scope of this thesis in mind because, apparently from the beginning, the Nepalis requested their own church with its own cultural characteristics detached from the western church and separated from the influence of the missionaries and clergy. Even though it was the foreign missionaries' own clear guidelines from the beginning not to overly influence or control the Nepali church, they may over the years have been frustrated at their low-key position as many had put much effort into finally arriving in Nepal as missionaries and then had to submit to their fellow Nepali Christian brothers and sisters among whom many were not able to read and write, but they did it for the sake of the greater purpose, to establish a Nepali indigenous church.

3.3.4 International and National Faith Based Organisations

3.3.4.1 International Nepal Fellowship

Two major mission organisations to serve Nepal, United Mission to Nepal (UMN) and International Nepal Fellowship (INF), came into being in the early 1950s. The INF traces its roots to when Dr Kitty Harbord of the Zenana Bible & Medical Mission, who had opened a healthcare provision in Nautanwa on the southern border of Nepal in 1927, recruited Dr. Lily O’Hanlon to work with her. Lily O’Hanlon and Hilda Steele came to Nautanwa in 1936 and founded the Nepal Evangelistic Band (NEB) on their arrival - the precursor of the International Nepal Fellowship (INF)

NEB was granted permission to build a hospital in Pokhara in 1952, and the foreign missionaries’ work in that medical sector resulted in a famous hospital known as the ‘Shining Hospital’, a name given by the Nepalis because when looking at the hospital from the hills around the NEB mission compound the sun glared from the aluminum fabricated hospital. ‘We often sit and look at the house that shines,’ reported a group of hill women in an INF account from 1954.²⁰⁶ Even today, it is one of the two interdenominational Christian mission INGOs in Nepal with its principal working remit to help people affected with TB, leprosy, disability, HIV/AIDS and drug abuse.²⁰⁷ Today, NEB exists under the name International Nepal Fellowship (INF).²⁰⁸ O’Hanlon reported:

The little group of Nepali Christians who had walked into Nepal from Nautanwa in 1952 lived near the missionaries to help them in the work in various ways. At first it was natural to hold the Sunday services

²⁰⁶ INF, 1971, 17

²⁰⁷ INF, 2014

²⁰⁸ O’Hanlon, 1974, 1-5

near the Hospital and let Buddhi Sagar and Putali, the indigenous couple, walk the three miles from their home to join the rest of the Christians. It was soon felt however, that this family should be the center of the spiritual work. There was not room inside their house so Buddhi suggested that we sat in the shade of a clump of bamboos on his land.²⁰⁹

They built a bamboo hut for a church which later was replaced by a stone building.²¹⁰

David Mukhia in Pokhara became the first pastor in Nepal (Table 6, Roman - I, p. 86).²¹¹ Baptisms soon started which enraged the local authorities who issued warrants of arrest for the pastor. In comparable ways, the other mission posts were also important, for example, in Raxaul the opening of the Duncan Hospital and the opportunities that gave, and in Rupaidiha (Map 2) where Barnabas Rai joined the missionaries and preached the message of the bible; many Nepalis converted. Bal Krishna Sharma writes about Barnabas Rai that, from the beginning of his ministry, he emphasised the Pentecostal experience such as speaking in tongues and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.²¹² This was in 1936; he came to Rupaidiha from Darjeeling.²¹³ He moved to Nepalgunj inside Nepal in 1954 and started a fellowship (Roman - II, p. 86).²⁰¹

3.3.4.2 United Mission to Nepal

The Methodists were pro-active in setting up work in Nepal and Methodist Bishop J.W. Pickett, Bob and Bethel Fleming, Carl and Betty Friedericks, and Ernest Oliver (1911-2001) were key people who sent a letter to the Department of Foreign Affairs in

²⁰⁹ O'Hanlon, 1974, 43

²¹⁰ O'Hanlon, 1974, 43-44

²¹¹ Barclay, 2009, 190

²¹² 'Speaking in tongues' and 'baptism in the Holy Spirit' are two characteristics of the Pentecostal church.

²¹³ Sharma, 2001, 301-302

Nepal.²¹⁴ A reply was received from Foreign Affairs in the form of a letter from Shri K. A. Dikshit, the so-called Dikshit letter.²¹⁵ They were granted permission to start their work with four conditions attached to the Dikshit letter.²¹⁶ In 1954, a dozen able people representing different churches and missions were brought together under the sponsorship and hospitality of the National Christian Council of India (NCCI) in Nagpur.²¹⁷ John Barclay reports that Pickett ‘circulated an invitation letter from HMGN to other missions associated with the NBF in conjunction with NCCI with a view to “establishing a Christian mission in Nepal on the widest possible cooperative basis, a combined interdenominational international approach”.’²¹⁸ To reach this point was a long process, according to Lindell.²¹⁹ A new mission was formed named the United Christian Mission to Nepal, with eight charter members who primarily were NBF associates (p. 77) and it was to have a far reaching impact for the mission in Nepal.²²⁰

²¹⁴ Pickett and Fleming: Methodist Church in Southern Asia; Friedericks: American Presbyterian Church; Oliver: RBMU

²¹⁵ Lindell, 1979, 142

²¹⁶ The letter from Shri K. A. Dikshit (Dikshit letter): 1. All expenses for the establishment of a Hospital at Tansen and the Maternity Welfare Centres in Kathmandu are to be borne by the mission.

2. The staff for the Centres and for the Hospital should be drawn from Nepali citizens as far as possible and they should be properly trained

3. The Hospital at Tansen and the Welfare Centres in Kathmandu should be handed over to the Government of Nepal after five years

4. Distribution of medicine and treatment of all patients should be free.

²¹⁷ Lindell, 1979, 144-145

²¹⁸ Lindell, 1979, 144; Barclay, 2006, 5

²¹⁹ Lindell, 1979, 146; Consider some of the questions the charter members were asking and had to handle with their sending bodies: ‘Why should we not try to go in on our own, alone, and keep to the calling God has given to us? Why join together? What are the advantages of joining? If we give our missionaries and money over to this united mission, what ‘say’ will we have in directing them and their work? Who will control and direct the new Mission? Will we have any worthwhile hand in it? Who will own the property of the Mission? Will we, when we put money into it? In fact, who will own the Mission with its resources, institutions, people and work? How can we work according to those four conditions of the Dikshit letter, and other kinds of restrictions? How can denominational board missions and free societies work together with all their differences in so many ways? Should Europeans go in at all? Or should work in Nepal be undertaken only by Christians from India? How would our constituencies at home think of this kind of thing? Would they continue to support us in such an arrangement? Will the historic border societies be squeezed out and the mission be made of only denominational church boards?...’, see Lindell pp.145-146

²²⁰ Rongong, 2012, 52; (1) Regions Beyond Missionary Union, (2) Church of Scotland Mission, (3) American Presbyterian Church, (4) Methodist Church in Southern Asia, (5) Zenana Bible and Medical Mission, (6) World Prayer Mission League, (7) Swedish Baptist Mission League and (8) United Christian Missionary Society

The mission played a major role in the beginning but later, as the Nepali church grew strong, its role weakened. Principles (aims, organisation, location, administration, money etc.) were laid down in an attempt to define the mission to which member bodies should subscribe when joining.²²¹ The Mission's First Constitution in Article 1, Foundation is stated in Table 8.

UMN's First Constitution in Article 1
<p>Believing that God in response to the fellowship and prayers of His people has indicated it to be His will, the United Christian Mission to Nepal was established on an interdenominational basis under the auspices of the National Christian Council of India and Pakistan at a meeting held in Nagpur on March 5th 1954 ... this is considered the birth date of the Mission.²²²</p>

Table 8: UMN's First Constitution in Article 1

A group of expatriates was granted permission by the government of Nepal to open a hospital in Tansen and women and children's welfare clinics or dispensaries in Kathmandu.²²³ In 1954, UMN first went into Tansen, Bhaktapur and Kathmandu.²²⁴ The government suggested that the name of the mission was changed to United Mission to Nepal (UMN).²²⁵

The mission was established with its headquarters in Kathmandu. Since 1954, UMN was given permission to work in Nepal under a sequence of General Agreements with the Government of Nepal and UMN which had to be re-negotiated every five years. The conditions for working in Nepal were strict. It says in point 10 from 1975:

²²¹ Lindell, 1979, 145 (fn 9)

²²² Lindell, 1979, 145 (fn 8)

²²³ UMN, 2014

²²⁴ Perry, 1997, 65

²²⁵ Rongong, 2012, 53

The UMN and its members shall confine their activities to the achievement of the objectives of the Projects to which they are assigned and shall not engage in any proselytising and other activities which are outside the scope of their assigned work.²²⁶

Although the Nepali Christian and the missionary came in side by side during the first decade of the Protestant church in Nepal, in the 1950s, 'the missionaries accepted specific restrictions against proselytising imposed by HMG'. They appeared 'content to play a supportive role and let the church in Nepal grow up under indigenous impetus and leadership.'²²⁷ They opted not to get involved in up front church leadership.

3.3.4.3 Nepal Christian Fellowship and other FBOs

The Nepal Christian Fellowship (NCF), now National Churches Fellowship of Nepal (NCFN), played a significant role during the first thirty years from 1960-1990. It was started by 30 people on the initiative of Ernest Oliver to keep the unity of the slowly growing Nepali church. The first president was Ps David Mukhia (Table 6, Roman - I, p. 86). In 1966 Ps Robert Khartak became president (Roman - V). As long as NCF, as a fellowship of churches, was the only assembling factor there was de facto no denomination in Nepal. Most churches were members of NCF and this lasted until the 1970s.²²⁸ It can be argued that NCF of itself formed a denomination, an issue which became clearer when Assemblies of God (AG, Pentecostal) started as an independent, registered, church in 1981. Already from the 1950s there were AG fellowships inside Nepal (Roman - II) and Ezekiel Joshua from India was officially licensed by the AG Church in India to work in Nepal in 1975, according to Perry.²²⁹ There was another

²²⁶ Lindell, 1979, 270

²²⁷ Perry, 1993, 96

²²⁸ Barclay, 2009, 192

²²⁹ Perry, personal notes: Ezekiel Joshua was officially leading AG church work in Nepal from 1975, and AG considered a denomination in Nepal but under AG India.

group called AGAPE Christian Fellowship under Robert Khartak formed in 1980 following a formalised constitution and basis of faith in 1978 that some churches like Nepal Isai Mandali (Gyaneshwar) and Ramghat (Pokhara) decided to pull out of. They wanted to have a less formalised ‘fellowship’ of like-minded churches, according to Perry and Gibson.²³⁰

Also bible training was offered, as AG based a nine-month Discipleship Training Centre (DTC) in Kathmandu, formally organised in 1981 by Bal Krishna Sharma. Nepal Bible Ashram (an initiative of NCF), started an interdenominational two-year course in 1981 in Jorpati. Before that, Nepalis had to go to Raxaul for a one month training or Darjeeling or further away. Bible schools were dangerous in those days.²³¹ Both AG and AGAPE were Pentecostals (and Charismatics), whereas NCF tended towards Baptist/Conservative but also Pentecostal and included any Christian Nepalis anticipating God’s intervention in daily matters. Many saw these additional assembling fellowships as mischief, but more churches and individuals who were not entirely happy with NCF had been making an appearance.²³² For an ordinary Christian, there is not much difference, if any, between the various ‘denominations’. Below are listed the objectives and strategies of the NCFN as they looked in 2009:

²³⁰ Gibson, 2014, 112; Perry, personal notes

²³¹ Khatry, 2012, 131

²³² Kehrberg, 2000, 175; Kehrberg has suggestions of membership ratios of the various fellowships of churches, particularly as that ratio changed markedly in 1990

Objectives and Strategies of the NCF Nepal (2009)

Objectives:

1. Maintain spiritual unity between the churches.
2. Strengthen and encourage churches across Nepal by providing academic theological courses, trainings and conferences to empower churches with the knowledge of the word of God.
3. Facilitate and support evangelistic work and campaigns.
4. Practically demonstrate the love of Christ through community development projects.
5. Work for peace, social justice and human rights (in relation to children and women in need as well).

Strategies:

1. Empowering the Church of Nepal for spiritual, social developmental and peace and justice ministries.
2. Seeking cooperation with national and international church and para-church groups.
3. Building a partnership for resourcing projects and activities.

Table 9: Objectives and Strategies of the NCFN

These objectives, which have not changed much over the years, have been useful to the unity of the church, particularly in the beginning when NCF was the only interest group. Later, other groups came into being. Most FBOs came at the end of 1980 and in the 1990s (Appendix B, FBOs, A03).

3.3.5 Independence of the Nepali Church

Ramesh Khattry writes that ‘the Nepali church was totally independent and self-reliant right from the beginning.’²³³ Independence from foreign churches and denominations and the expatriate missions was evident in three ways: 1) ‘the leadership was entirely Nepali;’ 2) ‘the churches were financially self-funding;’ 3) ‘and there were no

²³³ Khattry, 1997, 302

denominations, each congregation was autonomous.²³⁴ The decision to remain self-sufficient among Nepali Christians in Nepal had been made.²³⁵ Although Khatry may be right, it does not mean that there were no cultural and leadership-style carry-overs from the first leaders' own experiences in Darjeeling or from other of the mission posts along the Indo-Nepal border. It was unavoidable as these leaders had just come to Nepal from India but, over time, particularly as the leaders became indigenous Nepalis, the Nepalese characteristics became more strongly consolidated. This approach was possible among the Christians due to many years' preparation during the recruitment in India, an attitude held both among the Nepalis and the expatriate missionaries, many of whom even mastered the Nepali language, just to emphasise their determination. Denominational peculiarities and hair-splitting discussions had been stopped a long time ago and a focus on bringing the Christian faith to Nepal in a Nepalese way was all along on the agenda.

Although Khatry says that the church was totally independent and self-reliant then, obviously there is no such thing and especially not as the ties to Kalimpong-Darjeeling were strong, but Khatry expresses the vision that Christians had at the time: a respect for that vision and each other, both among the Nepalis and the expatriate missionaries. It was very likely a great help in fulfilling that vision that they had already had a full translation of the Nepali bible since 1914. The strong Nepalese church culture and leadership style, in addition to the Nepalese conversions, which over the following decades were done almost exclusively by Nepalis, reinforce the Nepalese cultural environment.

²³⁴ Barclay, 2006, 6

²³⁵ Khatry, 1997, 302

Occasionally, during the following years, it became tempting for many Nepalis to ask the hundreds of foreign missionaries for financial, educational and theological help. And vice versa, some missionaries or foreign FBOs, particularly non-resident FBOs, appropriated various opportunities to justify support, for example, in cases with church building projects or salaries to pastors. They thereby put themselves in a situation of creating an unhelpful dependence between Christian Nepalis and missionaries and also created tensions between Nepalis who received support and those who did not. Financial support for church buildings and support to pastors appear to be legitimate support areas, however, according to the guidelines drawn up by the Nepali Isai Mandali (point 2e, p. 87) and the general attitude among the Christians as outlined by Ramesh Khatri, even support such as this was not acceptable. The channeling of foreign money is a contentious issue. As the non-Christian part of the Nepalese community questions the conversion motive of the Nepalis, all the more so do many Christians question the motive of other Christians who receive money from outside. Donald McGavran had already warned about that dependency prior to 1951 in India as a step away from local theology and the preservation of Nepalese Christianity.²³⁶ The missions wanted to put themselves at a distance from the missionaries who supported Nepalis as opposed to those who did not which created an undesirable lack of trust, particularly later, when not all missions were under UMN or INF. However, it must be added that money issues are not easy to deal with in a poor country where there are relatively rich missionaries among an enormous group of poor Christians, and strong

²³⁶ Barro, 2003; Barro writes: 'Without a doubt, the homogeneous unit principle (HUP) is the most controversial of all church growth principles. Donald A. McGavran, the founder of the Church Growth Movement, began to write on the HUP in 1936 and elaborated it into a fully detailed principle in his book *The Bridges of God*, published in 1955. Later he founded the Institute of Church Growth, later leading to the establishment of the Fuller Theological Seminary's School of World Mission in Pasadena, CA, which became the center from where his ideas spread throughout the world'

principles are bound to be table-top exercises only and a long way from real life when Christian Nepalis delineate their actual need for help.

Even so, the vast majority of the Nepali Christians were independent of foreign aid and sustained themselves, and Khatry is right in that the churches were established by Nepalis and not by expatriate missionaries. Ganesh Tamang claims that ‘missionaries never came to Nepal as preachers or religious clergy. With one or two exceptions, there are no expatriate pastors in Nepali congregations.’²³⁷ The Christian belief system was, and still is, proliferated by the Nepalis; this is, though, not exclusive for Nepal - the house churches in mainland China, certain churches in Bali, the Bhutanese church in N Bhutan and other places have also been propagated by local ethnic people. It is extraordinary how low-key foreign missionaries keep in open spiritual and leadership matters. This mentality came from the Nepali house fellowships but is also an attitude which developed in NBF promoted by Oliver (Section 3.3.3).

3.3.6 Summary

A most interesting and challenging distinctive of the Nepalese church development, particularly during the time of preparation while in Nepal (the 1950s and 1960s), is the dialectical Christian approach to reaching the Nepali people with a holistic Christian doctrine from both the church and the mission. Particularly in the beginning, the mission was a key player in the cementation of the church yet without interfering with internal church affairs. However, the mission sustained the Nepali Christian people by employing them and praying for them, and generally by being available as friends. This unconventional low-key role among foreign missionaries over time appeared to be

²³⁷ Tamang, 2012

justifying itself. The missionaries' main role in Nepal was to set up dispensaries, health stations and hospitals. Later they also built schools as both the Protestants and the Catholics were engaged in this activity. Towards the new constitution after 1990, various technical areas were added as seen to be useful development projects for the Nepalis. Nevertheless, there were small signs of frustration on both sides: the missionaries – compared to the Nepalis – were rich, and they did not support poor pastors or other Christian people, and missionaries may have been frustrated that they could not engage in full-scale missionary work but had to submit to both the governmental requirements to maintain their visa and their own common agreement between Christian Nepalis and foreign missionaries of not interfering with church work. Along this trajectory, highly educated missionaries submitted to Christian Nepalese leadership and teaching despite obvious challenges, cf. Ramghat Church's point 1b and Nepali Isai Mandali's point 2b (p. 87).

3.4 House-Fellowships

The core of church life in Nepal originates from the house fellowships. House fellowships are the way Christians have always met and worshipped. Christians met for worship in the Early Church (AD 30-313) and church buildings first began to emerge in the second half of the Early Church, even then Christians met privately.²³⁸ The bible authorises fellowship meetings in the homes:

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts.²³⁹

Greet Prisca (Priscilla) and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus ... Greet also the church in their house.²⁴⁰

²³⁸ Moreau, 2004, 95-96

²³⁹ Bible: Acts 2:46

Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.²⁴¹

Allegiance to Jesus Christ pared to the bare bones is without rites and rituals except for a few which are easily adaptable to different traditions. Therefore, house-fellowships have always been popular in church history. The Nepali church, therefore, should be able to be integrated into the Nepalese society through house-fellowships, provided there are not too many preconceived ideas about the form and figure of the church. A leader from Nuwakot, born in 1964, a key person in the Asha Church, who was among the early Christians as he became Christian when he was only 10 years old, said, 'In 1978 I started a house fellowship in my own home.'²⁴² Another informant (Tek Bahadur Tamang) who was born and brought up in a Buddhist family used to be a shaman (*bombo*) doing witch-craft (*tantra-mantra*).²⁴³ He joined the Indian army when he was young. During that time he said, 'I felt frightened for some unknown reason, and I could not sleep the entire night'. He was put in a mental hospital by his officer and stayed there for five days. He still had the same fear after he had retired, then one day Christian people from the Asha Church came and shared their faith and said that if he would believe in Jesus Christ his fear would disappear, and he could sleep properly. The informant said 'As I believed their words it changed; that night I slept soundly with dreams of Jesus who took away the fear.' This informant, who has three sons and two daughters, said about house fellowships:

In the old days regarding house fellowships every believer is eagerly awaiting their turn (the house fellowship moves from house to house in the group), and they are looking forward to give some snacks. But

²⁴⁰ Bible: Romans 16:3-5

²⁴¹ Bible: Colossians 4:15

²⁴² I-01/4

²⁴³ I-06/4

nowadays house fellowships are conducted in the church (some places only). Therefore believers are not interested in the house fellowships, there is no difference between church and house fellowship. In the old days in the house fellowships we used to do some fun with them, I used to take them on a picnic, sometimes a little party in order to entertain them...²⁴⁴

Surya Tamang, an informant from the Dhading group said:

At night he (Surya's cousin who is Christian) came to my home with a small NT bible and some Christian hymns. He prayed for my mother, and he came to visit us three days in a row. The third day she was healed. Seeing my mother's healing, five family members became Christian, then we started a house fellowship in my home (in Dhading, Kutal). When my mother became healed I received Jesus Christ as my personal saviour. After some months persecution began. At that time we had sixteen Christian families. The main persecutors were *lamas* and *jhankris*.²⁴⁵

And, briefly, two pastors report, 'It began with a house fellowship'²⁴⁶ and 'First it was a house fellowship; later on it became Aradhana Church.'²⁴⁷ Fellowships across the country look pretty much the same, and they have a strong Nepalese culture. The Christian church culture originates from such house fellowships and the Nepalis can easily identify with this culture because the worship life of the Nepali house fellowships by and large have adapted to ordinary Nepalese culture and are not a given church culture superimposed on the Nepalis. Typically, a Nepali house fellowship meeting starts - or ends - with a cup of traditional Nepali tea and some snacks and the people chat together. It is a good time. Then using the Nepali songbook (*Khristiya Bhajan*) they sing and someone gives a word from the bible. People sit wherever they can; another may give a testimony of an experience and yet another shares a family problem.

²⁴⁴ I-06/4,16

²⁴⁵ I-09/3

²⁴⁶ I-25/15

²⁴⁷ I-35/24

Finally, all pray out loud at the same time and one finishes by summarising the issues important to them all. Such a meeting is easy to start and people like to join in. People come as they are, some straight from the fields without changing clothes or without behaving differently, they come to the house fellowship as Nepalis. Home fellowships are inherently practical because of the feeling of being at home, being safe and because of the low cost associated with them.

Churches as separate buildings usually develop from house fellowships where the first group of people in an area meet and get to know each other. There are advantages to meeting in private homes as new believers or non-believers are not alienated by the impression of a religious building. Due to the guidelines proposed by the Ramghat and Nepali Isai Mandali churches and the informal structure of house fellowships, the Nepali church has a high degree of recognition throughout Nepal with their informal Charismatic/Pentecostal style. Saturday is a public holiday in Nepal, therefore, the worship service quite naturally takes place on Saturdays. The church building itself is usually not stylish but often just a low-cost basic room perhaps with one or two additional rooms attached to it. Toilets are beginning to be common assets. Shoes are left outside as people sit on the floor, often men and women separated as they sit.²⁴⁸

After establishing a church building, the house fellowships continue to exist as mid-week activities. Nepali Isai Mandali, the largest church in Nepal, has 107 house fellowships in addition to their churches.²⁴⁹ Occasionally, house fellowships are conducted in the local church building, according to Tek Bahadur (p. 101), in which case the sense of feeling at-home disappears. House fellowships allow space for

²⁴⁸ Tamang, 2012

²⁴⁹ Gyaneshwar, 2009

personal development and care as opposed to the Sunday service, or Saturday service as it is in Nepal. When more people are gathered together, more order is required and the leaders need to have a programme to run the service. In a house fellowship, although a simple routine establishes over time, anyone can ask questions of any kind or make any kind of preferably spiritual contribution.

The Nepali church is new, both as house fellowships and churches, but fortunately it has not isolated itself from the rest of the people of Nepal (Chapter 6) although it may not have any noteworthy impact on society, and it may not yet be fully accepted. That may still take a decade or more and a considerably higher proportion of the Nepali population being Christian to make a substantial impact on society. A qualified assessment is that today there are one thousand churches in Kathmandu; in addition there are about sixty-five bible schools or colleges in Kathmandu Valley alone according to Ramesh Kathry; however, from a church perspective, it may be a problem that the vast majority do not grant a degree.²⁵⁰ Ian Gibson writes that most of the Nepali bible colleges teach evangelical theology, and he claims that they have international contacts to lessen provincialism (Section 2.2, p. 36).²⁵¹ In addition, there are smaller, short-term bible schools and various Christian NGOs and FBOs based in Kathmandu which means that Christianity is beginning to have a foothold at least in Kathmandu (Appendix B).²⁵²

²⁵⁰ Khatry, 2012, 132

²⁵¹ Gibson, 2014, 39

²⁵² Barclay, 2009, 189

3.5 Two Rules of Government – Two Christian Generations

At the dawn of Democracy, after almost forty years' Christianity in Nepal and with a new era of people growing up in Christian families, tensions between the older Christians and those becoming Christians seemed to be emerging, thus revealing a church less homogeneous. Challenges and possible dangers for the church are identified in this chapter using primary sources from the field and participant observation.

It may have been Dr Rajendra Rongong (b. 1930) who first coined the terms *first-generation Christians* as denoting the first Christians in Nepal, those who became Christians in Nepal from 1951-1990, that is primarily during the Panchayat system of government, and *second-generation Christians* as those who became Christians after 1990, that is during the Democratic era. These two generations of people are not to be understood as descendents of a new generation from the former generation people but as two eras of people although closely linked together. They describe Christian conversions during two distinct eras with diverse consequences. There is much reason for having terms for these generations. In this thesis they will be called the Panchayat generation and the Democratic generation respectively, instead of the first-generation and second-generation Christians partly to qualify the term and partly to avoid confusion with Christian descendants of first- or second generation Christians.

In forming the Nepali church in the 1950s, the Nepali Christians faced almost 40 years of trouble when, allegedly, more than 300 Christians were imprisoned because of persecution, according to Khatry, until the Constitution and Civil Law were abolished in 1991, when the Christians were given a window of relative freedom which grew over

the years.²⁵³ For a detailed list of persecutions informing on arrests, sentences and tortures of Christians from 1970-1990, see Rongong.²⁵⁴ The real suffering for most came from families when they refused to accept converted Christians as family members, as family life is essential to Nepalese identity.

The description of the Christians in the Panchayat and Democratic periods comes from informants. 83% of them had opportunities during the fieldwork to talk about differences between these two rules of government. One question from the semi-structured interview was:

*The Christians during the first forty years of Christianity in Nepal are usually called the first-generation (Panchayat generation) Christians. After the Democracy in 1990 we talk about the second-generation (Democracy generation) Christians. Do you see any particular danger or challenge to this group of new Christian believers, any specific things they should be aware of?*²⁵⁵

68% of informants stated directly or indirectly that the time before Democracy (before 1990) was a time in which the government and particularly the local communities, including the Christians' families, persecuted the Christians. A persecuted Panchayat generation Tamang Christian asserted that they were persecuted during the time of the

²⁵³ Stephen, 2000; Khatry, 1997, 301; Outlook, 1972, 48; Bulletin from 1972: 'Nepalese Christians released from jail. A pastor and three other Nepalese Christians spent last year in jail after their arrest in an outlying town because of local opposition and restrictions on overt evangelistic activity. The four, whose release was slated for December of last year, are members of the tiny Nepal Christian Fellowship, which exists apart from the United Mission to Nepal, a broadly representative missionary agency. In 1970 the Mission signed a five-year agreement with the government to continue providing needed services in education, Tibetan refugee aid, agriculture, medicine, and other areas'

²⁵⁴ Rongong, 2012, 152-168

²⁵⁵ The question was asked differently to different informants because I was challenged with different languages, translators and situations

Hindu festival, *Dashain*.²⁵⁶ Tamang people usually participated in the *Dashain* festival.²⁵⁷

In Dhading, Christians suffered considerable persecution in the early days. According to the primary sources, this was particularly in the mid-70s. One of the persecuted people, Ganesh Bahadur Tamang, was the main founder of the Asha Church. He was not alone during one specific time of persecution. His challenge was to go through suffering as he knew other Christians were watching him to see whether he gave up, which he did not. He is a very humble man now in his seventies. Although it was difficult to get an interview with him, eventually I succeeded. I approached him and asked him to share the good times from the early days. His eyes were sad and he started to weep. I understood that for him those early days from the mid-70s were associated with suffering, hard work and persecution. He had been through torments from the local community people that he could hardly describe and faith in Jesus was tied up with endless work to guide and pray for people.²⁵⁸ A young Democratic generation Christian leader who lives by faith made the following statement:

Before Democracy, there was a lot of persecution, and those who accepted Christ became very strong, and we are the fruits of that, of their commitment. So comparing with them this new generation our faith became weak and not very strong. This is one of the challenges. From one side, when there is persecution it is not good, but from another side it is good regarding faith. If there is persecution our faith can be strong, but if there is freedom, whatever things we can do, and when there is freedom people can take things very lightly. So now what is happening is, the influence from TV, radio and magazines, the

²⁵⁶ *Dashain* is a seasonal Hindu festival

²⁵⁷ Höfer, 2004, 29 (Picture 3) Picture of Tamang men participating in *Dashain* festival

²⁵⁸ I-5

distribution and broadcasting, there are so many things, it is open. It is good to have freedom also.²⁵⁹

This young man is wrestling with the issue of persecution and seems to cover what many informants have in mind. One statement from a Panchayat-generation leader, who is illiterate but has been a leader in a church in Nuwakot for the last twenty years, states that because of freedom (the freedom acquired during Democracy), people have become too free.²⁶⁰ He is from the hard times and sees some problems with Christianity as it has become during Democracy. This hint of a problem will be taken up below. It is interesting, though, that even among the younger Panchayat-generation Christians, many appear to favour the times during Panchayat with respect to the level of Christian integrity. Rekha Tamang, a young unmarried woman, about 25 years old from Gorkha, said:

But nowadays Christians are taking Jesus very lightly, they are going to church, they do not have any problems, they can worship, they can even sing very loudly; here they have facilities in the sense of worship, but sometimes I feel like we need some persecution to be very strong in faith and that time we will then first really know who are the real followers of Christ. I believe that because now it is very easy to say I am a Christian, to share the gospel in Pokhara or in the Kathmandu area. We take life very easily but if we get to persecution we will really find who is really a Christian. If heavy opposition comes, many people will leave Jesus. If heavy persecution broke out, like killing and kidnapping many would leave the Christian faith. It is too easy to be Christian in the sense that we just have to believe and follow Jesus, in lots of cultures they have to spend a lot of money; we do not have to do that.²⁶¹

Her statements are very likely true, and they could be taken at face value but they are also more easily stated than lived out. It seems convincing to me that many have

²⁵⁹ I-27/25

²⁶⁰ I-23/15

²⁶¹ I-03/14

accepted the value of the far rougher Panchayat years with respect to the quality of Christian life. No one has questioned that. Most people, though, seem to be happy about Democracy, including the Panchayat-generation people. They may not say so directly but they do have far more freedom to exercise their faith. 'Freedom' is a term informants used to describe living conditions for the Christians during Democracy.

As no informant, or any of the secondary sources, has questioned the *persecution* against the Christians during the Panchayat system and the *freedom* the Christians experienced during Democracy, they will be taken as verified facts in this thesis. However, it does not mean that persecution no longer exists in Nepal; neither does it mean that there were no signs of freedom during the Panchayat era - after all the church did grow throughout the forty years from the revolution in 1951. About the former, one leader said, 'there is no persecution from the government's side, but there may be from the side of the local community,' and a woman said that, although there is freedom through Democracy, there are still some believers who are under persecution from the local community, especially from their families.²⁶²

3.5.1 Panchayat-Generation

The Panchayat-generation Christians lived and evangelised among ordinary Nepalis who, on principle, were unfriendly to this new worldview of Christianity. These Panchayat-generation Christians, meanwhile, developed a strong Christian identity which, on the one hand, separated them from traditional religious practices and rituals but, on the other hand, preserved their Nepali-ness, their cultural traditions. Hindu festivals, for example, were made objects of unacceptable traditional religious practices

²⁶² I-4/26; I-8/21

for believers to mark their exclusive Christian stand, see also Bal Krishna Sharma regarding cremation rituals.²⁶³ This Nepalese lifestyle instigated growth in the church, although it grew slowly in the beginning. Only after the mid-1970s did the church start to grow more and more and it was after 1990 that the church set off at a more rapid pace. The Nepali Church, established during those strenuous years, was founded in this way on its own Nepalese understanding.²⁶⁴

The Panchayat-generation Christian era testifies to personal times of loneliness, determination, suffering and persistence. Many had to move from their ancestral lands to other, unknown places in Nepal because of persecution, while others lost their jobs, and were subject to physical and mental mistreatment and were stripped of their heritage rights. Some of these were teenagers who had no choice but to drift around in the mountains from place to place until they found other Christians with whom they could stay for a longer period of time. In the midst of this, with their faith ‘appropriately reinforced by the experience of persecution’, they prayed for people and started fellowships.²⁶⁵ Many of these Christians became those whom we are now looking back at with great awe and respect. Much could be said about these stout and valiant men and women but that is outside the scope of this work.

3.5.2 Democratic-Generation

The Democratic-generation Christians, particularly in the cities, are usually more skilled than the Panchayat-generations among whom many are illiterate. They are skilled at computing, often able to speak several languages including English, are educated, have

²⁶³ Sharma, 2013, 34

²⁶⁴ Cundy, 1994; Lindell, 1979; Hale, 1993

²⁶⁵ Sanneh, 1993, 57; see Ramesh Khatry’s claim (3.3.5)

been to bible school, can handle musical instruments, are articulate and read newspapers, have a driver's licence etc. The older people's pious and devout standard of living with the hymns and the *madol* (traditional Nepali drum) is challenged by action worship supported by electric guitars, drums, keyboards and the novelty of unusual hairstyles and fashion. Differences in activity level and lifestyles between the two generations have, meanwhile, produced communication problems and some talk about a generation gap.

Likewise there are different Christian approaches to traditional Nepalese practices between the two generations. Below are examples of divergences between Panchayat-generation Christians and Democratic-generation Christians.

3.5.3 New Times and New Challenges

As hinted at above, freedom may not be without problems. From the interviews, it seems that it created a series of dangers and challenges for the Asha Church and, by implication, for the entire Christian community, some of which will be looked at here. A key to understanding some of these problems may be seen from the following three assertions from two leaders and a girl, 1) 'freedom gives more "freedom," ' 2) ' ... nowadays there is too much freedom', and 3) 'after freedom people got too much freedom.'²⁶⁶ Freedom is tied up with the Democratic type of government after 1990, where ordinary people engage in politics, and can utter their personal opinions and write freely and where now also the Christians can worship and share their Christian faith freely. In addition, people can choose their spouses and live a life after their own choices as opposed to the traditional lives which are usually framed from

²⁶⁶ 1): I-9/13; 2): I-20/17; 3): I-25/14

childhood in a Hindu caste system or in a Buddhist system. Freedom gives more options for lifestyles. Coming from the pre-Democratic rule of government, where life was poor and predictable, the existence of freedom may not be at all easy for a Christian either to comprehend or to navigate. This may be true for both the Panchayat-generation and the Democratic-generation Christians. Below are some examples which clarify the concerns.

3.5.3.1 Lack of Faith and Commitment to the Church

In summarising the views of a significant number of the informants, it becomes clear that it is a concern, directly or indirectly stated, among both Panchayat- and Democratic-generation Christians that Jesus is taken more lightly by the Democratic-generation Christians. From the interview-based material, the message is that there are Democratic-generation Christians who are not serious or dedicated and their faith is weak in comparison with the Panchayat-generation Christians. Furthermore, these informants assert, in varying degrees, that persecution may be a necessary factor to gain strength in faith, and that only persecution will disclose who the real followers of Christ are.²⁶⁷ Devi Bahadur Tamang, an elder of the Asha Church in his mid-40s, who is also the director of a registered bible training centre in Nepal, a key leader who has been part of the church from the beginning, in referring to the role of persecution in experiencing true Christian life states that ‘a woman without children does not know the pain of childbirth.’ He goes on to say that there ‘is a great danger of nominalism’, and also refers to a Biblical account:

[d]uring the time of Moses people knew who God was and feared him. ... The coming generations ... did not know the Lord, and they

²⁶⁷ I-3, 4, 7, 14, 23, 25, 27

were not facing persecution. They just heard the stories. Therefore I am a little bit worried about this coming generation of Nepal, whether there will be any real Christians.²⁶⁸

What is more, the Democratic-generation Christians have lost the ‘fear of God’ and also ‘the fear of people’. This latter is taken to mean that the respect for authorities is disappearing, for example the ‘fear’ of church leaders and parents. It is a corollary of this that Panchayat-generation Christians have prestige and status because of the suffering they experienced during the Panchayat period, just as the party politicians did, at least initially, just after 1990. On the other hand, many Democratic-generation Christians gain prestige and status through their skills (Section 3.5.2). Along the same lines, I wonder whether the Democratic-generation Christians were also inferring loss of fear of government and other authorities since they changed the laws against conversion. Freedom and higher education give a lot of potential to make new controversial decisions. Freedom is a factor to take into consideration as Tek Bahadur Tamang said:

During the first (Panchayat) generation my faith was very strong. I fasted 40 days. I used to go to the high places (high mountains) for prayer and fast (Gorkha, Durba, Ligligkot, Mirkot, Budikot etc.).²⁶⁹ But now after freedom or Democracy people are not serious with their prayer life, even me. The new generation have no persecution, therefore they are not serious with Christian activities such [as] prayer life, bible study and family (house) fellowship etc.²⁷⁰

This Panchayat-generation leader admits he gives in to indolence and neglect from an earlier valiant and strong lifestyle because the environment has changed. It is simply not necessary any more to keep focused as Christians. Therefore, the newer freedom-

²⁶⁸ I-4

²⁶⁹ Strategic prayer as sketched by Pastor Gurung (4.1.5)

²⁷⁰ I-06/13

generation or Democratic-generation Christian cannot singly be held responsible for their way of living as the Panchayat-generation is also tempted to do the same. I am glad for Tek Bahadur's honesty because it brings more nuanced information to the statements.

3.5.3.2 Lack of Proper Clothing or Inappropriate Appearance

Two people addressed the problem of inappropriate clothing among ordinary Christians and among Christians in leadership positions in the church, for example, among some worship leaders. Attention is particularly drawn to the urban-settled young women as their dress style has changed from the traditional Nepali to tightly fitting jeans and t-shirts. According to one pastor, they seem uncomfortable sitting down on the floor. And, he says, in addressing female singers in such clothing, 'they cannot raise their hands, because then the t-shirt would go up and people could see major parts of their stomach [pointing up to the breasts]. This will distract people's mind when they are worshipping and praying, and they are not concentrated on the Lord.'²⁷¹ There were comments on hair-styles among some worship leaders; one said, 'the young generation is influenced by those who are not Christian including their hair-style and fashion.'²⁷² Another one explained more comprehensively that certain hair-styles were not necessarily bad behaviour in a Christian context, rather it is a matter of people's evaluation of such a person in terms of the Christian qualities he or she might signal. He said 'if I have long hair I look rough' and I 'may be involved somehow as a

²⁷¹ I-2

²⁷² I-12

gangster ... how can people then respect me, or in what way do they respect me?’ Short hair gives a gentle look.²⁷³

3.5.3.3 Lack of Role-Models, Parental Upbringing and Responsibility

To address some of the problems sketched above, one worship leader suggested that young people need role models, for example, the parents. He also said that ‘the church leadership needs to take responsibility.’²⁷⁴ One pastor seemed to agree as he pointed out that inappropriate clothing among worship leaders is an issue which must be addressed by the church leaders to the parents of the worship team. He said, ‘it was more important how they dressed and acted than it is a matter of voice.’ A woman claimed:

[W]e as parents must be examples for them [the children]. The fault does not reside with the pastors or leaders but lies with the parents as they lack teaching in how to apply the word of God. If we as parents do not walk the true way with God our children will not do either.²⁷⁵

Along those same lines, a number of informants point to the responsibility the parents have for bringing up their children and for communicating with their teenagers. The communication is not always good despite the fact that many teenagers and even older ‘children’ want to debate with their parents on different general or youth issues but often do not find sufficient understanding or interest from their parents. Consequently, some teenagers are drifting away, smoking and drinking.²⁷⁶ One woman summarised many opinions by maintaining that Christians have no code for bringing up children anymore as opposed to the Hindu families where there are still special care and rules, at least for girls:

²⁷³ I-31

²⁷⁴ I-30

²⁷⁵ I-10

²⁷⁶ I-15

[Christian] parents think that their boys or girls they know Jesus, so they can differentiate. But sometimes parents are wrong, and they have given total freedom. Today most Christian boys and girls they are in bad relationship stay a long way from home, even grown up girls. Parents' responsibility should be upheld. It is because of the freedom.²⁷⁷

She continued by stating that, as the Democratic-generation Christians are not only the teenagers but also those in their twenties, parents cannot entirely be to blame. However, many teenagers and young people of Christian parents have been let down by inadequate upbringing. They have not had enough suitable role-models, even though it is axiomatic that most young people are looking for role-models, and they have had no correction which is what is expected within socio-religious traditions (*sanskriti*) in Nepal.

The first example described the apparent tension between freedom and persecution in relation to the youth. The next example focused on specific issues where the appearance of young people cause other people to feel uncomfortable, perhaps even upsetting the socio-religious traditional codes like respect for other people. The last example looked at the need for role models for young people, especially pointing to parents' responsibility. As freedom, which has come in the wake of Democracy, seems to be threatening the Nepali church, attention is drawn to emerging tensions of the Asha Church. Although the young people need good parental teaching and role-models, the parents also need teaching. Not all church leaders are equipping parents for supervising their children in this fast-changing world. One reason for this may be a general lack of having been prepared for this task by the church leaders.

²⁷⁷ I-12

From the above, including primary and secondary sources, it is clear that there is an expectation from the older generation that the younger generation behave according to certain set patterns.²⁷⁸ Five informants said that there is a ‘generation gap’; one young female informant explained that ‘the main problem is a generation gap because our leaders are illiterate but our youth is really educated.’²⁷⁹ The youth say, how can we follow you when you cannot read? The leaders say, no, you have to follow us. There is a generation gap, and the main problem is education. The leaders do not want to change, it is their habit.’²⁸⁰ Other informants have said that the problem is a lifestyle difference between the two generations. These tensions are complex.

Freedom, meanwhile, need not be a negative asset. A young leader stated, ‘It is good to have freedom also.’²⁸¹ He finds there are possibilities in the free world and mentions modern resources like the media. He says that living in freedom is a challenge to the Christian people. Perhaps this leader is touching on precisely the important issue - that of critical inculturation. According to the material from the field, the interviews, freedom and Democracy are real challenges to the church, particularly to the young people who are exposed to a world of possibilities.

Times are changing in Nepal, not only because of Democracy but also because of globalisation. The influx of media, computers and new types of secular education are guiding a young generation into fields where Nepalese habits, customs and traditional ways of approaching matters are challenged. The old generation of leaders seems to have neglected the teaching of parents and others to be role models for their children

²⁷⁸ Primary sources are the interview material in the field. Secondary sources are relevant literature, magazines, CDs and DVDs, web-based video-sequences, podcasts, discussion fora etc.

²⁷⁹ I-01/13, I-04/26, I-15/12, I-24/19, I-26/23

²⁸⁰ I-24

²⁸¹ I-27

and the youth. Additionally, the Panchayat-generation leaders give the impression of being unwilling to initiate a generational handover of their authority in the church to the younger generation or to invite them in a welcoming atmosphere to discuss a common future for the church. This problem of authority creates a reaction which results in tensions among the youth. Continual mutual disrespect between the Panchayat-generation and the Democratic-generation will probably not produce much fruit for the Asha Church. This kind of disrespect between generations and lack of handing over of areas of responsibility may not be unique to Nepal. At this juncture, the picture identifying possible dangers and challenges to the Asha Church has shown a tension between the two generations, a generation gap, aggravated by national socio-political ground swells which occurred when the Democratic rule of Government gave people new opportunities for action.

3.5.4 Variety in Caste Composition

In exploring deeper the harmony and homogeneity of Asha Church with respect to the various castes it is noticeable that the composition is primarily made up of the Tamang tribal group, just as 71% of the informants also came from this tribal group. There is, therefore, a minority of non-Tamang in the church, and during the fieldwork it was noticed that there were Christians from many castes and tribal groups. Under the all-Nepalese socio-religious traditional canopy (*sanskriti*, Section 5.1) each of these castes has its own cultural expressions, such as their various traditional clothing, different singing and dancing traditions, and marriage customs. Therefore it may be assumed that the Asha Church to some degree is a culturally fragmented church rather than being harmonious and homogeneous. Although this is not discounted as a possibility it was not observed during the fieldwork and not mentioned as a problem by

any of the thirty-five informants, except for that which has already been mentioned regarding the two generations.

Even though there may be many reasons why this was not mentioned or observed as a problem there are four most obvious reasons for this (during fieldwork, such reasons become apparent): 1) some of the castes, who are traditionally proud of their cultural distinctiveness, like the Hindu dominated high-castes, Brahmins and Chhetris (*Parbatiya*), are only represented by a small minority of the church; although the actual number is not known there are not many; 2) Christian marriages across castes appear to have established a mutual social and cultural understanding between some castes; 3) Christians in the Asha Church are used to working together and 4) Christians usually honour the fact that they can worship across castes.

Nonetheless, 1) if the dominant castes had made up approximately 30% of the church corresponding to the actual representation in Nepal (2001) then in all probability their inherent social and cultural heritage and, therefore, dominance would have had either positive or negative bearings on the daily work of the church, and the church would have appeared differently.²⁸² 2) In the same way, had believers not married across castes the level of cultural comprehension between castes within the Asha Church might not have been the same, and some might have felt socially and culturally dislocated. 3) Had people not been used to working together in the church, cultural approaches would have been expected to emerge differently; meanwhile, according to Nepalese *sanskriti* it is quite common to work together across castes in Nepal. 4) It is proposed that

²⁸² Bhattachan, 2008a, 108-109

disregarding and dishonouring the natural way of worshipping across castes within the church would have created a different cultural atmosphere.

The latter does happen in some churches although not so much in Nepal; although there are a few high-caste churches, they are rare, but Wascom Pickett reports on India from the 1920s that caste barriers were seen as disadvantages, primarily because some churches deliberately segregated former high-caste Christians sitting up front from the former low-caste people at the back, kept apart inter-ethnically.²⁸³ In the same way, Chris Sugden writes about the Balinese Christians in the 1970s that the Christians ‘were forced out of their own Balinese community, and were offered a new identity in the Christian community which was alien to them.’²⁸⁴ Therefore, although there may be other reasons than these, as the variety in caste composition as observed during the fieldwork has not proven to be a problem it will not be taken up as a topic in this thesis.

3.6 Conclusion

One issue that impresses while making a survey of Nepalese Christianity is the immense Christian activity outside Nepal prior to any substantial Christian activity inside Nepal. A number of key factors played a significant role during the first hundred years from 1870-1970, even from before 1870. One factor was the new missionary trend invoked by the visionary and far-sighted William Macfarlane who founded mission activities in Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Sikkim - strategic places - and whose emphasis was on education, Christian literature, bible translation, and village evangelism. Other factors were Ganga Prasad Pradhan’s Gorkha Mission at the missionary stations along the border and the establishing of Nepali house fellowships and churches. Later, from 1920

²⁸³ I do not have any data on them.; Pickett, 1933, 325

²⁸⁴ Sugden, 1997, 56

to after WWII, a slow and difficult time for, primarily, many foreign missionaries occurred dominated by strategic and administrative changes when the Presbyterian and Congregational churches of Northern India together with the churches of the Eastern Himalayan Mission of the Church of Scotland formed the United Church of Northern India (UCNI) in which EHCC emerged as a central member. Over the years, more foreign missionaries from different points came to Darjeeling and the Indo-Nepal border to minister among the migrant Nepali settled families and workers. In the 1940s, some new missionaries came into Darjeeling who were not so formal in their approach to mission, and a few 'faith' missionaries had already come from two decades earlier, the founders of the NEB, the precursor to INF.²⁸⁵ They were individuals and initiated informal mission activities in the vernacular and associated with evangelical and faith missions.

Everything changed dramatically when Nepal opened up the border for particularly Nepali Christians and foreign missionaries so that they could settle and start working together on Christian terms and yet each in their own ways duly respectful of each other's work, maintaining and sustaining each other. UMN and INF concentrated on its development projects and the church strived to advocate for their Christian belief and to establish churches in Nepal. The idea of a Nepali indigenous church was promoted and maintained before this opening through meetings in India. British missionary Ernest Oliver and NBF members, along with the NEB, had a strong say in this vision of seeing an indigenous Nepali church; they encouraged this attitude widely among both Christian Nepalis and foreign missionaries not least during the forming of UMN. The terms and

²⁸⁵ Zenana Bible & Medical Mission opened a healthcare provision in Nautanwa in 1927. NEB (Nepal Evangelistic Band) was the original name; it changed while in Pokhara to INF (International Nepal Fellowship)

guidelines devised by Ramghat Church in Pokhara and Nepali Isai Mandali in Kathmandu, alongside direct and indirect approvals of Nepali leaders, indicate that this approach of making an independent indigenous Nepali church was welcome.

In the 1970s, the church became more consolidated, and although the number of Christians was not many, from then on until the Constitution and Civil Law were abolished in 1990 and the Democratic Government of Rule began, the church grew strong. A number of new churches were established 1975-1990 (Appendix B, FBOs, A05). From the beginning of the time of Democracy, the church grew even more rapidly. Meanwhile, a tension between two generations of two systems of government arose which is reminiscent of a generation gap. The Panchayat generation has, by definition, no young people left as the entire generation has become adults. It is evident from the data, though, that this tension must also be seen as a response to two different cultures developing from conversion during two different systems of rule: the Panchayat system and the Democratic system (see Chapter 4). In addition to this, the earthquake which happened on 25 April 2015 had a major impact in Nepal, along with the systemic change of government in 2008 to a secular federal republic with a finalised constitution in September 2015. This may perhaps produce a third generation Christianity in the future, only time will tell. Persecution was serious during the Panchayat days but to most Christians the local persecution from the family and the village is devastating.

This introduction to Nepalese Christianity and the establishment of the Nepali church has also introduced Asha Church, the case church, as being well-established. From that perspective the next four chapters of analyses focus increasingly closer on the Nepali Christians starting with an analysis of conversions to Christianity in Nepal (Chapter 4).

CHAPTER 4

4. Towards a Change of Allegiance

In this and the next three chapters (Chapters 4-7) I analyse the Christians from different perspectives to answer the research question. The first prominent Christian encounter is the conversion from traditional beliefs to Christian belief. Therefore, this chapter makes an attempt to identify obvious or underlying factors in spiritual encounters between Christians and traditional religious people that may cause a change of allegiance to Jesus Christ or to the Christian church.

For this study I hypothesised that, due to the significance of the social event of conversion in people's lives, a chapter on conversion would bring many interesting perspectives. This conversion chapter did not emerge from the ground, as the result of Grounded Theory, as I made the decision to study this topic. Although conversion did not emerge as a category due to my prior decision, there is a category and a high-level concept which encompass feasible data for this analysis. Conversion notions and stories in this chapter are primarily based on one GTA category named RELIGIOUS DYNAMICS BETWEEN TWO CULTURES (Figure 7) and one high-level concept TESTIMONY (Figure 8).

In the interviews, I usually started by asking about the location(s), environment, family situation, events, caste, possible extended Christian family etc. of the informant and then about the informant's conversion testimony or story. This information is conceptualised in the concept LOCATING THE INFORMANT and its low-level concepts (Figure 8). Often major parts of these low-level concepts were interlinked in the conversion story accounts as conversion stories have socio-religious notions and issues

within the family and caste etc. Although it was relatively easy for me to collect all the conversion stories I did find that there were spin-offs of the accounts in different places in their interviews. Therefore the category (Figure 7) became important.

Irrespective of traditional beliefs in gods and goddesses, worship and the use of religious practitioners is part of every Nepali. Nepal is now declared a secular state but for many years ‘the king was regarded as the protector of [righteous and religious] Hindu [living] (*dharma*),’ according to Axel Michaels, and the state was also a defender of religious values.²⁸⁶ Today, not much has changed religiously. Although Nepal became a republic in 2008 with an interim constitution formulated in 2007, the final constitution only came about in 2015. India is also a secular state (1950) with a constitution but even so the vast majority is Hindu. The great number of different religious traditions and ethnic groups of Nepal have learned to live side by side in an enormous socio-religious patchwork.

²⁸⁶ Michaels, 1997, 79; *dharma* means religion or religious living but encompasses the notion of being righteous

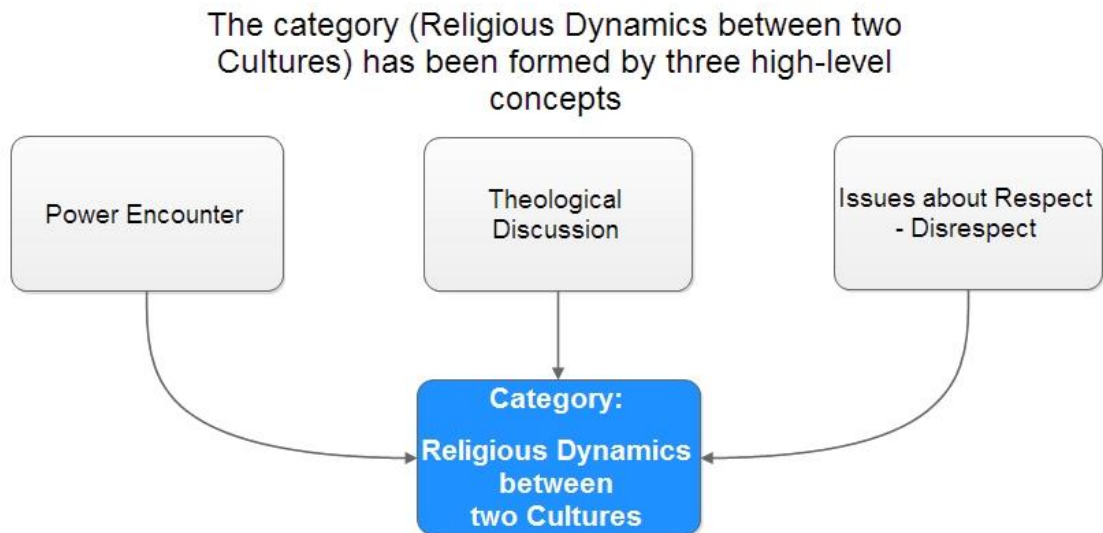


Figure 7: Grounded Theory: Religious Dynamics between two Cultures

The Christians who are a relatively new group in the country also live side by side with the rest of the Nepalis but at times tensions arise. Confrontations of a spiritual nature suggest that people have interfered in sensitive issues or crossed over socio-religious barriers and, consequently, spiritual matters have fired up. Such spiritual confrontations, which at times seem strong, are usually unpleasant for both sides, and according to interviews there are informants who have experienced confrontations. The category RELIGIOUS DYNAMICS BETWEEN TWO CULTURES (Figure 7) comprises many of these confrontations; therefore data segments from this category play a significant role in this chapter. The fact that people convert is a reason for a spiritual encounter but there are other reasons as this chapter will demonstrate. Encounters rooted in the religious tend to have socio-cultural repercussions and vice versa - socio-cultural encounters may have religious repercussions.

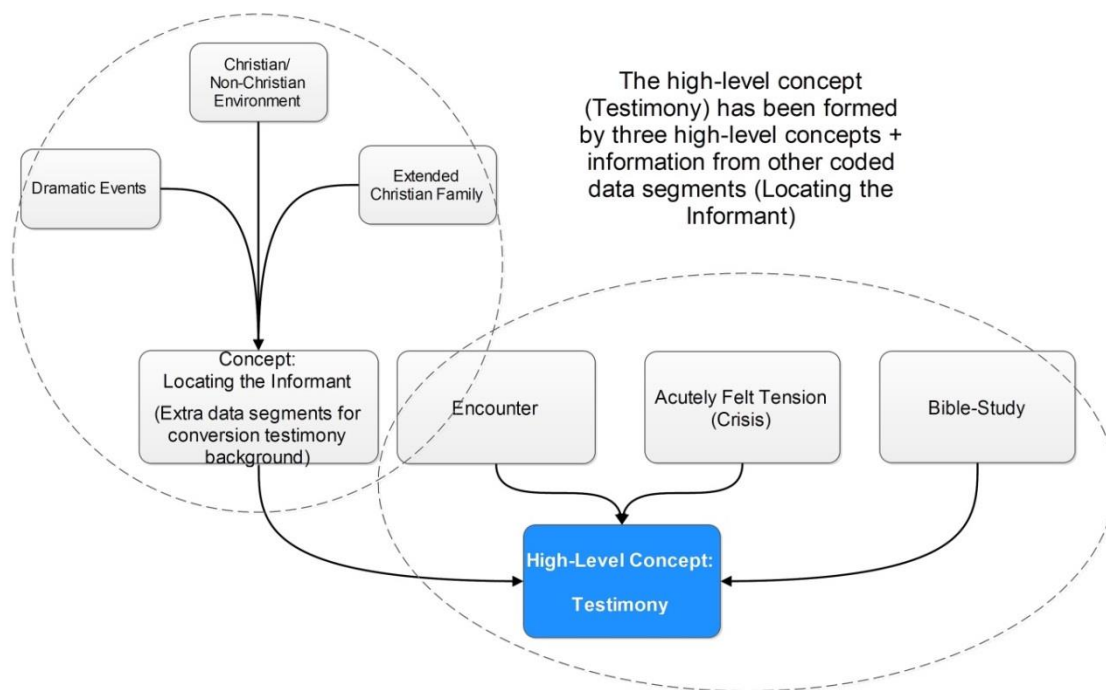


Figure 8: Category and Concepts (Testimony/Towards Conversion)

This chapter examines and identifies different kinds of confrontations or encounters to outline some important causes that influence conversion and the Christian lives and church fellowship of the Nepalis. The focus is on spiritual encounters and forms of recovery after spiritual afflictions and sicknesses, as told by informants. The underlying theoretical and practical aim of these narrations is to establish some of the most important ways people become Christians in Nepal. Chapter 3 outlined the Christian Nepalese history and the establishment of the wider Christian community and church inside Nepal whereas this chapter identifies the ways people become Christians. Five stories have been put together to give an illustration of spiritual power and dynamics (Section 4.1). Other conversion accounts are collected in the following section (Section 4.2).

4.1 Spiritual Power Encounters

Essential literature is available about shamanism, Hindu Brahmanism etc. among traditional religious Hindu and Buddhist Nepali people which will be referred to as appropriate but there is not much covering the tensions between Christians and traditional religious people. Different kinds of spiritual encounters between Christians and traditional religious people are interesting because they disclose areas of Nepali religious lives not well documented in Christian literature, and only a few Christian missionary books regarding Nepal have hinted at this. Nepalis are usually polite, smiling and humble; therefore, such information is not readily accessible to outsiders. Religious confrontations or encounters between Christians and the traditional religious people take various forms.

Confrontations or encounters which are primarily of a spiritual nature are termed ‘power encounters’ in this thesis. ‘Power encounters’ are to be understood as an encounter usually in the spiritual dimension, that focuses on a seemingly spiritual reality from both sides, meaning from the Christian side and the traditional religious people’s side. The socio-religious dichotomy between traditional religious people and Christians comprises power of vengeance and conflict. The spiritual power is linked with powers from spirits, shades, ghosts, dead ancestors etc. whereby religious practitioners (*jhankris, lamas, bombos, pachyus* etc.) become significant and involved. Christians are not interested in conflicts or calling on religious practitioners, but the issue is more nuanced as will be clarified in the current and coming chapters.

Traditional religious Nepalis believe that there are different spiritual powers for different purposes. Certain religious practitioners believe they are able to take advantage of their priestly or shamanic position to take control of certain spirits to create

confrontations with a religious person or perhaps with entire communities of other religious traditions. In Nepal, this is usually not their prime function as the religious practitioners have different areas of life to focus on regarding their ritual specialty, for example, they maintain protection, heal people, and endeavour to balance out irregularities between power tensions in a pantheon of gods and goddesses that might manifest as frightening or distressing to people. Power encounters may occasionally be rooted in the mental or emotional but may be the consequence of a rational or physical act. Such mental forms may reveal themselves as discrimination, degrading of caste rank, isolation, bullying through aspersion or slander against Christians, even persecution as there are a number of records of Christians who have been persecuted ranging all the way back to the beginning of the 1950s.²⁸⁷ Such encounters may have spiritual associations because emotions like anger or anxiety within traditional religious people due to Christian activity might lead to the consultation of a religious practitioner.

There are many different examples of confrontational issues in the data but in this section there are five examples of informants portraying spiritual confrontations between Christians and traditional people. The five informants are a Kumal woman, a low-caste woman, a Tamang pastor, a Tamang woman, and a Gurung pastor. This selection serves to examine the spiritual realities and challenges people face in Nepal. The focus is on spiritual powers which unfold in different settings. In the discussion, other informants will be involved as appropriate. The Kumal, Tamang and the Gurung tribes, each in their way, are glued to old traditional religious lifestyles including

²⁸⁷ Shrestha, 2002; Christians are not the only group who have been subject to bullying; Dalits and other groups have been subject to bullying behaviour for centuries. According to the National Census 2001, in Nepal there were more than 3 million Dalits in Nepal compared to 23 million Nepalis altogether

religious practitioners.²⁸⁸ The low-caste informant is Hindu but as such she also calls, for example, a ritual specialist (*jhankri*) or a Hindu priest in different situations such as during sicknesses. The informants, now they are Christians, are exposed to spiritual matters both through their own caste system but also other caste systems and by the religious practitioners in these caste settings, primarily their own, which at times develop into real confrontations.

There is a real fear of ritual specialists (*jhankris* and *bombos*) which is the result of their alleged enormous power, but as some Nepalis become Christian and start exercising the authority of Jesus Christ over territories, demons and sicknesses, they begin seeing themselves as spiritual people able to manipulate or to exercise authority over traditional spirits. To what extent newer Christians fully understand the Christian belief system or whether it is used as a comfortable power system to assume control over their general well-being as a power demonstration in the face of other people, is not entirely clear. The Christian belief of literate people has an advantage compared to illiterate people because of their ability to read the bible. The Christians of Asha Church tend to not look at themselves as *bombos* because of the relatively high level of Christian education in the Nepali churches generally, especially in urban areas. This teaching or education makes people balance some broader theological training with exercising Christian authority over evil spirits. As far as I see it there is a tendency to both theological development and character building along with charismatic exercising of Christian authority, at least in Asha Church and similar churches in the central and western regions of Nepal where there is relatively easy access to cities.

²⁸⁸ Gurung, 2012, 1; There are different common terms used for the religious practitioners: The Kumal use *jhankri* or *bokshi*, the Tamang use *lama*, *bombo*, and *lambu*, and the Gurung use *pachyu* and *klehpri* to denote priests and shamans; there are many other terms for ritual specialists or religious practitioners, both in Nepali and in other languages

I infer this because more people, particularly young people, the Democratic generation, but also some from the Panchayat generation are given opportunities to join courses. Even just one or a couple of weeks' training in Christian understanding in topics covering basic theology and character building enables many Christians to understand far more about their Christian belief. It is a fact that many teachers and more educated people move to cities and leave the rural areas with greater educational challenges. Although character building is one of the strong priorities in topics on love, peace, kindness, and self-control, this part of the chapter focuses on spiritual powers and conflicts because this has not been identified properly in Nepal.

4.1.1 A Direct Power Encounter

Like many rural women, Pabitra Kumal is illiterate; she is from Gorkha of the Kumal caste and has experienced healing from demon possession.²⁸⁹ When both she and her husband were demon possessed, the local Hindu priest (*janne*) was unable to do anything about it.²⁹⁰ They were healed by a Christian Tamang woman.²⁹¹ Later she recounted the following episode:

²⁸⁹ I-10; I-10/12; Pabitra Kumal, an informant, says: 'Though I do not know how to read and write.'; Höfer, 2004, 9; Gautam, 1994, 332; The Kumal caste is among the pure castes and belong to the 'Enslavable Alcohol-Drinkers' (see Table 4, p. 47), they trade almost exclusively with pottery. They are Hindus but also adhere to the ancient traditions of spirits and demons, therefore they consult religious practitioners like *lamas* and *jhankris*

²⁹⁰ In Nepal more specific expressions like *jhankri*, *lama*, *bombo*, *lambu*, *janne*, *bokshi*, priest etc. are used for the more mundane term shaman which to a Nepali would not be a satisfying term

²⁹¹ I-10/5; 'I was born and brought up in a Hindu family; at the beginning I did not have any problem. But after my marriage my husband became sick (BS2049). I went to the *Manakamana* Temple to offer a male goat in order to get my husband healed. But my husband was not healed. I went to the *janne* (Hindu for *Jhankri*) to get my husband healed. My husband was demon possessed; he did not want to even look at his children. If the children came in front of him he tried to beat them. Sometimes he became unconscious. I waited six months; perhaps he would get healed within that period of time. But this did not happen. But after six months, one day Tanka Chandra's mother came to see us. How are you, daughter? I'm fine but my husband is not well. The last six months my husband was demon possessed she explained to Tanka Chandra's mother. I have tried everything, but nothing works. Then she said to me: daughter, I will pray for your husband, God will heal you. Believe me, whatever I have I give you. Then she gave a pill against fever. Then she prayed that the medicine would work. She said, God will heal your

One of my younger brothers' wives became sick, at that time my father invited me to pray for her. Before I reached my father's home they took her to the *jhankri*. When I reached my father's home I met the same *jhankri*, Man Singh Kumal. He told me, "Let us compare your God and my *mantra*. Who will win?" That *jhankri* made war with me. "If your God can kill within the next six months, let him. Otherwise I will kill you with my *tantra-mantra* (sorcery)." I prayed for protection, I did not know much about this. But by the grace of God he did not harm me, but after six months I learned that one night the *jhankri* had died. Now we have twelve believing Kumal families in our area.²⁹²

Pabitra Kumal claims that the religious practitioner (*jhankri*) made war with her. To the outsider such a claim may appear exaggerated but most Nepalis have experienced a *jhankri* at work and have heard many stories of their religious performances. Generally, Nepalis are afraid of the *jhankri*. Although the Kumals are Hindus they stick closely to ancient traditions like beliefs in spirits, demons and evil powers, and consequently the use of religious practitioners like witchdoctors and witches (*jhankris* and *bokshis* respectively). Often sicknesses are diagnosed as being a demon possession not only among the Kumals but generally in Nepal for which a *jhankri*, *lama* or *bokshi* is called to chant *mantras*, according to Rajesh Gautam.²⁹³ He also says that the Kumals believe in many gods, some of whom are considered dangerous to life.²⁹⁴ This traditional belief mixed with Hinduism is common to most rural people in Nepal and is accompanied by deep respect and fear. Larry Peters writes specifically about the Tamang religious practitioner, the shaman or the *bombo*, in similar terms that 'the villagers both fear their

husband through this medicine. That night my husband had a dream, in his dream he saw a man wearing white cloth. That person said to my husband. You are going to be healed. After having heard this voice he felt that he received freedom. Next morning I took my husband to Tanka Chandra's home, he stayed three days in their home. The third day my husband went back home with a NT Bible. When I saw my husband I was surprised because the last six months he was in bed but now he was working without any people's help. After seeing my husband's healing I received Jesus Christ as my personal saviour. Until today by the grace of God we are secure.'

²⁹² I-10/10

²⁹³ Gautam, 1994, 332

²⁹⁴ Gautam, 1994, 333-4

power and need their help to keep the spirits at bay.’ ... ‘the *bombo* is a sorcerer capable of good or evil. He will confront the spirits on his patient’s behalf in long, dramatic healing rituals. Or he can command the spirits to deliver harm.’²⁹⁵ At the request of someone who is in need of the service of a *bombo*, people will gather and his drum will sound throughout the night. Höfer says that ‘the *bombo* is a ritual specialist who establishes his contact to the superhuman mainly by means of some ecstatic techniques.’²⁹⁶ Gabriele Tautscher describes a *bombo* wearing his distinctive belongings when he is at work:

His headdress, adorned with peacock feathers, porcupine needles and cowry shells; his chain of *rudracche* nuts; a chain with bells; ritual knife; his drum with a three-faced ritual knife beautifully carved as handle; his bamboo drumstick in the form of a snake; ...²⁹⁷ ... porcupine quills used as a shield of protection against the ‘other worlds’; and the horn of the mountain goat as a reference to the earthly being of the ‘midspace’.²⁹⁸

András Höfer describes the *bombo* thus: ‘A complete change of personal identity, i.e. possession, occurs when the shaman proceeds to divination. Then (though without any obvious sign of being in a somnambulistic state or hypnotically absorbed) he addresses his clients as if a deity spoke through him by declaring...’²⁹⁹ It takes most of the night for the *bombo* to perform his *séance* and it is not a peaceful time as he hammers the drum for hours. There is a general recognition of the powers of the shamans or *jhankris* among most rural people who are at ease when the *jhankri* has left and the *séance* is over. This latter description concerned the Tamang *bombo*. 71% of the informants are

²⁹⁵ Peters, 1999, 61 (ch. 4)

²⁹⁶ Höfer, 1973, 168

²⁹⁷ Tautscher, 2007, 77; Jain, 2006; *Rudracche* nuts: Rudraksha tree (Indian) or Utrasum Bead Tree (English), Rudraksha means the eye of Rudra (Shiva). ‘Rudraksha is often believed to symbolize the link between the earth and the heaven;’ Höfer, 1973, 170; Eleocarpus fruit

²⁹⁸ Tautscher, 2007, 160

²⁹⁹ Höfer, 1973, 174

Tamang, and the vocation of the shaman is to position himself between the 'other worlds' and this world to command the spirits.

When Pabitra says that the *jhankri* made war with her she is probably right. It was a direct attack, since he said 'If your God can kill within the next six months, let him. Otherwise I will kill you with my *tantra-mantra* (sorcery).' Most Nepalis take such a statement as a powerful and dreadful challenge and are emotionally upset. Pabitra Kumal did not take up the contest or become afraid but she prayed for protection. She made a simple and neutral prayer leaving God to take care of her. She said that she did not know how to cope with such situations.

She says that the *jhankri* died after six months. It might be tempting to spin a good theological yarn over this report. However, when the entire interview is scrutinised for internal consistency there are two issues which arise bringing this data segment into question. It will not be expounded in detail here but the first is an almost uniform course of two sicknesses and corresponding healing by her husband and herself which, although not impossible, seems strange. The other is the use of the time period of six months in two different cases possibly due to her illiteracy which bring the authenticity of these data into question. However, there are no significant factors questioning the overall truth of her story as valid which is to demonstrate to what extent the spiritual confrontations are of an offensive nature.

4.1.2 Fear of the Christians

This 29-year-old married Tamang woman, Sunita Maya, from Gorkha has two children. She was born and brought up against a Buddhist background.³⁰⁰ She became Christian when she was around 14 years old. Enquiring into her relationship with the Buddhists today she responded in the following way:

We meet our father's sister's family once a year, they welcome us - outwardly. But inwardly they are not welcoming us. *How do you know that?* By seeing their faces and expressions, I can imagine how they feel. They do not allow us to enter into their devotional room (where they keep all their shrines, gods and goddesses). If they allow us to enter into their devotional room their gods will be angry because Christian people are true and holy. After that their gods will punish them. They are afraid because they believe that Christian people have power, not only the Christian God, they believe that when the Christians pray they have enormous power in the same way as when the *lamas* are reciting their *tantra-mantra*. Jesus Christ has power and they believe that the Christians have been given the same power.³⁰¹

One of my mother's brothers is a *lambu* (priest), whenever we used to visit him he was never at home. Every time he would be out, because Christian people have power. Non-believers (non-Christians) do not find any behavioural difference between the Christians and the Buddhists in the bazaar.³⁰²

Sunita Maya's aunt and her family do not appear genuine to Sunita Maya and her family in their hospitality. Sunita Maya knows their real attitude. The reasons are in the spiritual powers that threaten her aunt and her family. Sunita Maya mentions some of the Tamang religious practitioners, the *lama* and the *lambu*. Generally, there are three practitioners, the *lama*, the *bombo*, and the *lambu*. According to David Holmberg, the '*lamas* derive their power from the word and *bombos* from unique power of sight' whereas the power of *lambus* 'derives primarily from the act of sacrifice.' The *lambus*,

³⁰⁰ The Tamang Buddhism in Gorkha is a mix of Hindu festivals and Buddhist traditional practices including the use of the typical Tamang religious practitioners, the *lama*, the *bombo* and the *lambu*

³⁰¹ I-15/8

³⁰² I-15/9

like her mother's brother, maintain a balance between the divine and malevolent spirits in the *lamaistic* pantheon 'through sacrifices or consecrated offerings.'³⁰³

The presence of Christian people in a Tamang Buddhist house creates spiritual unrest, and the people in the house are seriously afraid of repercussions from their own gods. The Christians are not allowed into the devotional room in which there are shrines to perform prayer rituals or to honour and worship deities (*pūja*), candle lights, a Buddha figurine, a necklace of different stones, or different pictures. There are certain interesting parallels with the situation of the *jhankri* who waged war with Pabitra Kumal. Allegedly, Sunita Maya and her family in their friendly visit stir up the different agents by their very presence so that they are guided outside the devotional room and are not met with hospitality. Their very presence is worrying to the extended family and their prayers are to be compared with the enormous powers of *lamas* reciting their sacred texts (*tantra-mantra*). The powers of the *lamas* are known by everybody in Nepal and are deeply respected but much feared.

Sunita Maya describes an analogous situation with a family member who is a *lambu*. Holmberg says that 'What makes a *lambu* in practice is the precise control over detailed ritual procedures and specialised invocations. Tamang even refer to household heads, village headmen, and knowledgeable laity as "*lambu*" when they occasionally sacrifice.'³⁰⁴ This *lambu* avoided Sunita Maya and her family. The message from this informant is that social contact or other contact between Christians and Buddhists even among family may not be straightforward on Buddhist property because of a real fear of bothering and upsetting certain agents in the *lamaistic* pantheon.

³⁰³ Holmberg, 1989, 119

³⁰⁴ Holmberg, 1989, 119

4.1.3 Fever, Cold and Demon Possession

The following episode caused a subsequent revival in a village in Nuwakot back in the 1970s. It also caused persecution to this family who had to flee to another district without any preparation (Section 2.6.3):

I was born into a Buddhist family in 1968. After my birth my mother got sick because of a fever, cold and also because of a demon possession. This lasted for almost 6 years during which time we tried our best to get her healed. We sacrificed goats, chickens, pigeons and everything but we were not able to heal her. Finally the witch doctor said, you better take your mother into a Christian society, into a Christian church. Also one of our villagers, he was not a Christian, even he also suggested to take my mother to a Christian church. My father took my mother to a Christian church, and they prayed. This was in 1974, after praying over a period of two weeks my mother was completely healed. That was a great thing for us. That was a great thing for me.

At that time I knew there was one more superior god than all the other gods and goddesses, but I did not know who this Jesus was. I just knew there was one supernatural God, but later I came to know that this Jesus was preached by an Australian lady, Doreen.³⁰⁷ She came to Nuwakot in 1970. She stayed there 3 years, and she did not preach Jesus. She just learned the Tamang language, got to know all their culture, tradition and festivals, but after 3 years she preached to one lady, Birbal's mother, who became the first Christian in the village. She had the same problem.³⁰⁵

Doreen came purposely to preach the gospel, but did not preach the first 3 years, only she learned the culture and custom. One day she had the chance to preach the gospel to Birbal's mother because she had the same problem. She was also suffering from demon possession, and the like. She was sacrificing a lot. Doreen said to her that if you believe, then I will pray for you, then you do not have to sacrifice all these things. She was surprised but said, okay. One day she prayed for her, and she was healed. Everybody was shocked. Doreen said, it is not by me, it is by Jesus Christ. He came to save sinners. She was preaching back in 1975.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁵ I-01

³⁰⁶ I-02/4-6

It is interesting that the religious practitioner (*jhankri*) suggested that Pastor Bishal Tamang's sick mother should go to the Christians for help as did one of the villagers because none of them were Christians. It portrays one of the characteristic marks of the Christians, praying for the sick (Appendix A), and also indicates that the Christians did not keep a low profile even back in the mid-70s. Although the Christians were the last option, apparently they were an option as even the Buddhists came to the church for help. Pastor Tamang's mother was sick for six years, but in the hands of the Christians she was healed over the course of two weeks. The informant never forgot this.

Two informants, Pastor Bishal and Birbal, tell of these two Australian missionaries in the district of Nuwakot although Pastor Tamang only mentions one, Doreen.³⁰⁷ They offer rare information on what really happened during those early days in the village of Nuwakot. There were no known Christians in the entire district. Birbal's mother was the first Christian through these Australian missionaries who had devoted three years of their lives to the Tamang culture and language prior to sharing their faith. Therefore, Christian belief was communicated in Tamang, in the local setting, in local dress, in a local way addressing a very local problem: illness. Following the healing of Birbal's mother she became Christian. Pastor Tamang says:

I think that Doreen has done a wonderful job, not least because the Tamang people do not understand Nepali language well. That is why she chose to go to the Tamang people and learn their language. She spoke Tamang fluently; she was able to touch the hearts of the Tamang people.

³⁰⁷ I-01 & 02; There were two SIL missionaries in the beginning of the 1970s working there for at least three years, Doreen Watson Taylor and Fay Everitt. They worked with a Nepali, Karna Bahadur Tamang, with whom they wrote a linguistic book about the Tamang language (vocabulary) in 1972. Ghising, 2012, personal notes; Ghising writes that 'Doreen and her language assistant and co-translator Karna Tamang (a convert) undertook this important task so that the Tamang would hear Christ speaking unto them in Tamang'

The informants who are affected by the gospel but whose identity is also from before their conversion have nevertheless demonstrated different ways to combine their own Christian ways of living with the traditional Nepalese lifestyle.

It has become imperative to observe to what extent many Christians, even young Christians, are able to control their behaviour and act wisely in their own culture among the Hindus and the Buddhists. The way Doreen has acted in Nuwakot has demonstrated persistence and dedication and set a good example both to many cross-cultural missionaries but also to Nepalis concerning the negotiating of boundaries in a territory where Christians are unknown. Pastor Tamang says that ‘Doreen has done a wonderful job’. Throughout this thesis it becomes more evident that the Christians, although having their distinctive markers, embrace the Nepalese culture. Culturally, ‘a kind of osmosis is taking place’ or intercultural adaptation occurs between the Christians and the TRP when they live in the same village or neighbourhood and have common interests like attending the same school and work or participating in the same ceremonies.³⁰⁸

4.1.4 Territorial Spirits

Indra Kumari is a married woman with two children, thirty-one years old and belonging to the Biswakarma (BK) low-caste. She lives in Tanahun and attends the Tanahun Asha Church (TAC). She describes sicknesses in her family but one peculiar experience particularly conveys the form that spiritual encounters may take:

I was born in a Hindu family. Before I believed in Christ I had many problems from Satan. I could not stay in this house. If I entered into this place through the gate (her family farm through the gate) I fainted

³⁰⁸ Bosch, 1991, 456

... When I came into this compound I felt very weak in my body and I became unconscious. And sometimes I saw evil *mosan* (evil eyes, evil heads, and skulls) on the walls inside the house. I wish that everybody would come to faith in Christ and have victory.³⁰⁹

My husband had mental problems and would get mad ... Taking him for the medication at that time we heard about the good news of the Lord Jesus. After that we started to go to the church, the church was very far away at that time. His brother's wife had a mental problem as well. Both of them we took to the church and we stayed there two days in the church. After two days they were healed and we came back.³¹⁰

This person (a person in Gorkha), a non-believer, said that if you go to the church, he will be healed, this happened in Gorkha. This church was in Chyanglee, where Min Bahadur is the pastor. Over the next two weeks we could see that he (Indra Kumari's husband) was healed totally. Lots of blessings were coming on us from God, from our Lord. Now we are staying in this house, and Satan cannot do anything against us.³¹¹

In the first recorded paragraph which is a mix of two data segments as she talks about this issue twice, the narration of Indra Kumari's fainting describes a peculiar and stressful problem. The problem manifested when entering her own property, when she would faint, feel weak, become unconscious, and sometimes see evil *mosan* inside the house. Therefore, she could not stay at home. This kind of problem takes on a spiritual form of confrontation perceived as 'problems from Satan'. Although there is no specific explanation of her release from the fainting and the *mosan* impressions, it is clear that she was healed. Whether she was healed, or her husband's healing from an apparent mental problem set her free from her fainting problems, does not emerge clearly from the interview. Meanwhile, Indra Kumari draws a sharp line between before she believed in Christ and after. She asserts that 'Before I believed in Christ I had many problems from Satan.' In the same paragraph she continues: 'I wish that everybody would come

³⁰⁹ I-16/4,7

³¹⁰ I-16/4

³¹¹ I-16/5

to faith in Christ and have victory.’ In the last paragraph she stresses that ‘Now we are staying in this house, and Satan cannot do anything against us.’

In the second and third paragraphs, Indra Kumari explains about the sickness and the recovery respectively of two mentally sick people, her husband and his brother’s wife. The importance of this example is her addressing Satanic influences in her family and a territorial occupation of their property and the subsequent release by Christian prayer. It is called a spiritual stronghold and is explained as part of the next narrative (p. 142). Her religious view in relation to first being a Hindu and then being a believer in Jesus Christ permeates her narration, and the stressful circumstances she lived through made her contact Christian people.

4.1.5 Strategic Christian Prayer

This narrative is, as with the one above (Section 4.1.3), a pastor’s narrative. Pastors’ narratives are likely to be different from ordinary church members’ in the sense that they are better thought through. However, I have been surprised at the way in which most informants have been able to recall and present their thoughts on the spot when asked about socio-religious questions, perhaps due to their story-telling culture. Though this pastor, Dhan Kumar Gurung, is young, he has become a role model for a number of people because of his commitment and hard work. He portrays two different ways to use strategic prayer prior to propagating the Christian belief system or to building a church. He is thirty years old, and is married with three daughters. He is the pastor of TAC which is in Tanahun:

I have been to some places, temples, where I have been denied access because I was belonging to another religion. In fact, I would not go into the temple but a couple of times I have been to the areas to pray, particularly against strongholds in areas where they have not

established the church. Also some didi-bahinis have been up to temple areas to pray. I have been inside Swayambhu many times, no problem.³¹²

There is another place called Chandrawadi. Four years ago a brother, Ghaman Singh Tamang, and I decided to go there and pray.³¹³ We went there and stayed there half a day, prayed, did not talk a lot with other people. We did not say that we were Christians. We did not say anything about Jesus Christ, we went around like visitors and prayed quietly. Next time we went there, people asked us from where we came because last time we saw you. Then we said that we were Christians and we came here to pray. The third time we went there we sent a big group, 32-35 people to preach the gospel. At that time there was one family (name present) who received the Lord. They tried to come here every Saturday for the service. They are not rich, therefore they come on Friday walking, 3½ hours' walk, staying overnight in their relatives' home. Saturday they went to the fellowship and often have lunch with us and then go back again. We also visited them many times. Later on also our church board prayed for that place. Let us start a fellowship there, a Saturday service. We started a church service there in front of their house in the open air.³¹⁴

There are some similarities between this narrative and Sunita Maya's (Section 4.1.2) in that the Christian presence and their prayers caused problems among the Tamang Buddhists in their homes. Here the Christians take advantage of their authority to enter areas around temples to pray, or pray in the vicinity of an imminent church. Christians do not enter temples because temples are generally reckoned by the Christians to be outside their authorisation by God. They are not allowed to enter either by the Hindus as they belong to another religion or by themselves due to their own understanding of spiritual authority. Pastor Gurung says that he does not go inside the temples after he became a Christian but it seems that he was inside Swayambhu Temple. He lives in Tanahun so it is not clear why he went inside this temple which is in Kathmandu.

³¹² I-35/16

³¹³ A Christian brother, not a biological brother

³¹⁴ I-35/23

Pastor Gurung uses the word ‘strongholds’ as taken from the bible ‘For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.’³¹⁵ This Pauline scripture has warlike connotations but the weapons are not earthly weapons as in the military but are spiritual in the apostle Paul’s analogy meaning that 1) earthly strategy is meaningless, and effective strategy emerges through prayer, 2) the weapons are not physical, they are by nature spiritual and 3) the power of the Christians comes from God. This is the belief of any Nepali Christian. Therefore, he also says that the *did-bahinis* go up to the temple area (not inside the temple) to pray as this is for every Christian to do. It is known to be a common practice among Nepali believers, especially those engaged in prayer ministry.

So what is a stronghold? This must be understood solely in the nature of a spiritual blockage or an invisible hostile fortress that creates problems for the Christians, and that occasionally manifests physically. Christians perceive some of the spirits in the *lamaistic* pantheon and among the many Hindu gods and goddesses to be territorial and malevolent spirits or agents capable of doing harm to people, even harm to Christians if they do not follow biblical rules. Although Indra Kumari was not Christian, an example of a stronghold could be the one given in (Section 4.1.4) in which the malevolent agent(s) ruled as long as the family was Hindu, but when they became Christian the agent(s) had to leave. Some Christians can sometimes spot spirits, but generally they concentrate on cleaning an area spiritually by praying for people and for the presence of Jesus Christ. In cases of malicious spirits attempting to hinder the Christian work such spirits and their locations are considered strongholds, therefore, the Apostle Paul guides the congregation in Corinth to ‘destroy strongholds.’ The second paragraph follows

³¹⁵ Bible: 2 Corinthians 10:4

along these lines. Below is a discussion based on the five examples (Sections 4.1.1 - 4.1.5).

4.1.6 Discussion of Spiritual Power Encounters

To the rural Nepalis there is nothing unusual in invoking spiritual powers. Bal Krishna Sharma says that ‘Nepalis employ both Hindu priest and shaman (*jhankri*, *bombo*, *janne* etc.) at the same time’. He explains that the ethnic influence in Hinduism from the pre-Buddhist Bon Po religion era leads to a strong belief in ghosts of the dead in an animistic/shamanistic way, and in spirits of animate and inanimate objects. ‘Shamans are called for healing the sick and protecting people from evil forces,’ according to Sharma.³¹⁶ David Holmberg explains this in detail where he has researched the works of the three main Tamang religious and ritual practitioners, the *lama*, *bombo*, and the *lambu* (p. 134).³¹⁷ Gabriele Tautscher has examples of various *bomboistic* rituals among the Tamang people.³¹⁸

The five informants deal with spiritual activities from a pragmatic socio-religious viewpoint where spiritual powers manifest or are expected to manifest. This viewpoint is rooted both in the perspective of the traditional and the Christian religions as both point to a pantheon where there are different non-visible beings who by the traditional religious people are normally classified as divine or good if they can be appeased by a specific worship practice usually involving a ritual practitioner, and malevolent if they cannot be appeased. By the Christians they are all called fallen angels or evil spirits as

³¹⁶ Sharma, 2013, 13, 35

³¹⁷ Holmberg, 1989, (fx 166)

³¹⁸ Tautscher, 2007

in their understanding only God is genuinely good.³¹⁹ As shown in the five examples above (Sections 4.1.1 - 4.1.5), these informants have challenged, in different ways, traditional beliefs in spirits. To diminish or moderate the impact of power encounters between Christians and traditional religious people would be to miss its significance on the lives and lifestyle of the Nepali Christians when they convert.

The reason for Pabitra Kumal's spiritual conflict is not mentioned (Section 4.1.1). I speculate that the *jhankri* spiritually assaulted Pabitra because she offered her spiritual service to the person in need. Consequently, the mind of the *jhankri* turned against Pabitra because she took over his area of work. It is assumed that Man Singh Kumal, the *jhankri*, became filled with anger because Pabitra had become a Christian counterpart to him, another *jhankri*, and without knowing it she had become the key player in a game where she was challenging or perhaps even ridiculing the *jhankri*. This comparison, although speculative, may have authentic grounds as Nima Raj Ghising writes concerning the Pentecostal Christian Tamang in the far western district of Kanchanpur:

This shift of 'power' from traditionally privileged ritual experts to lay-people enabled individuals to take charge of their spiritual health through action. Gradually, Pentecostalism took over the role of local *bomboism* (Tamang Shamanism) by giving rise to individual 'born-again' *bombos* who can now deal with less-visible beings [spirits] individually and independently without the necessity of traditional *bombos*' assistance. It is precisely this new concept that led Tamang converts to view themselves as *bombos* as one elderly Tamang convert man put it.³²⁰

³¹⁹ Angels of God have not been included here as this is beyond the scope of this thesis. From a Christian theological point of view angels do exist but in Nepal they are not often talked about, whereas fallen angels, spirits capable of possessing people, are talked of every so often

³²⁰ Ghising, 2012, personal notes

The informant has stepped in as a Christian counterpart to the Tamang Buddhist *bomboistic* religious practitioner, and the *jhankri* reacted emotionally with anger and vengeance as in Pabitra's case. According to Ghising, there are Christians who view themselves as *bombos*. It is not for me to say whether Pabitra regards herself as a *bombo* or a *jhankri*, but I know that she often visits GAC and gets teaching from there; consequently as the entire shaman connotation and the use of spells and incantations like *tantra-mantras* have a different religious substance than the Christian, it is my assessment that she looks at herself more like an evangelist. However, it is recognised that some Christians view themselves as *jhankris* which may be a challenge to the real *jhankris*. Irrespective of any Christian approach regarding their self-image as a *jhankri*, it does not exclude the possibility that traditional religious people consider Christians who strive to get people well through prayer to be a class of *jhankri*. Another woman, Bhim Kali, also illiterate, said 'Everybody is respecting me because they have seen miraculous works in my life. Wherever I go they respect me now, especially in my village. Though they are not believers, when their cattle and people become sick they invite [me] to come and pray for them.'³²¹ She may not look at herself as a *jhankri* in a conscious way but if challenged by this Pentecostal 'born-again *bombo*' concept she might like to redefine her position in society even though she enjoys it or be more conscious about the way she approaches traditional people.

Man Singh Kumal waged war and suffered the outcome but the battle never came close to Pabitra, except during the initial stages, which may have been alarming to her so she prayed for protection. Whatever happened to Man Singh is not clear, except that he had died. She was aware that he was capable of carrying out his curse because she is

³²¹ I-11/7

conscious of the traditional background of the Kumals which is closely allied to ancient rituals and practices. The use of religious practitioners like *jhankris*, *lamas*, *bokshis* etc. is normal among the Kumal tribe (Section 4.1.1).

Sunita Maya (Section 4.1.2) reported the way she immediately spotted her Buddhist family's ambivalent attitude in welcoming her and her Christian family into their home, as they had a fear of their presence in their house. The reason, according to her, is that the Christians' power is comparable with the *lamas* when they recite their *tantra-mantra*. There are different reactions to these allegedly strong powers of the Christians. If the Christian power is stronger than the Buddhists, the most natural reaction would be the Buddhists' conversion. However, conversions rarely happen out of fear or emotionally distressed mental states. Many conversions involving Christian authority or power happen when people are healed from sickness or set free from some obsession, such as demon possessions comparable with the situation Indra Kumari experienced (Section 4.1.4) where she came to an impasse in her life. Her husband had become mad and she was under a strange form of attack, possibly a spiritual attack, even in her own property. The two weeks' stay in a Christian home where they received intercession and care transformed their lives. She knew that she was under an evil spiritual attack. She also knows, so she says, that no evil power has any access to her life any longer. This is her testimony, and demonstrates a power in the Christian world stronger than powers she has experienced among Hindus. The first contact with the Christian community often happens through a power encounter, however, not as a power demonstration as Man Singh Kumal, the *jhankri*, wanted, but to serve people in a beneficial way. Analogously, another female informant, Chandra Maya Hamal, says about the healing of her mother:

I was not brought up in a Christian family. When I was nine or ten years old my mother was suffering from some sort of sickness. She used to play Ouija too much; she used to go to the river to take a bath. She left at 8 am and would return at 5 pm. She stayed in the forest alone and shouted loudly, often crying. When I was in class 3 my father used to work in Kathmandu at a hotel. A friend there told my father that if my mother would go to the church she would be healed, that was all he told. My father did all sorts of treatments but she was not cured. He came home from work and told my mother that if she would go to church she would be cured. And from that day she knew deep in her heart that if she went to church she would be healed. She did not know that Jesus was our saviour, only that if she went to church she would be healed. From the day she went to church she was healed. It was really a blessing for our family. She is the best mother in the world. I used to live with my grandmother, and I studied everything in Gorkha.

This happened in Gorkha and was the reason why this informant and her family became Christians. Christian prayer caused the demons to leave. Conversion stories along the lines of Chandra Maya's are common. The Hamal tribe is a descendant of the Rajput and the Jaisi.³²² This example is given to demonstrate how the spiritual power of prayer is strong, even stronger than many other powers available in Nepal, and may lead people to change their allegiance to Jesus Christ when exercised for the benefit of people.

Many Nepalis who have had experiences with Christians and their spiritual approach by prayer have become attentive to the Christians. It is, therefore, tempting to point at the informant Sunita Maya's parents' seemingly irrational attitude towards Christianity. However, it becomes more meaningful when we gain more intelligence about people's tangible fear of the spirits in that we understand the fright and concern for the dreadful repercussions from those spirits if an alien power like Jesus Christ and his disciples

³²² Höfer, 2004, 52-53; Hamal may call themselves descendants of the Thakuries, however, a Rajput (Thakuri) or Jaisi father does not accept *bhat* (rice) from his Hamal children. This seems to indicate that there is a difference in rank position, according to Höfer

break into their territory. Many envision scenarios of shades and spirits who inflict sicknesses and accidents on families, so Sunita Maya's parents' attitude does make sense.

During times of crisis, along with the exercising of benevolent spiritual powers in the church, people may become Christians like Chandra Maya and Indra Kumari and their families. In these and similar cases, converts develop an exclusive Christian approach towards traditional practices which has also become a mark of the Nepali church. Pastor Tamang (Section 4.1.3) demonstrates this kind of exclusivity when his mother was healed:

After the healing of my mother, my father said to my mother: Now you are completely healed, you do not have to go to church. We do not want to be Christians; we want to go back to our old religion. But my mother replied to my father, 'No! I will not leave Jesus. If you force me, I will divorce you, I cannot forsake Jesus Christ.' My father got shocked, what was that inside. Something has been put into her mind, what is it? ³²³

Traditional practices are quite pervasive covering most of the life of a person and his family. This ranges from the arrangement of the interior of a room or a house, to daily religious practices like performing prayer rituals to honour and worship deities (*puja*), making a usually red religious mark on the forehead (*tika*), offering sacrificed food to the idols (*prasad*) and performing ceremonial practices like ritual hair cutting (*chhewar*) and ceremonial death rituals (*kiriya*). They also include secular activities like the departure times of a bus, time for harvest, and names for a new born that are suggested by astrologers, and converts know that these practices are rooted in traditional religions. Each caste and culture has its own way to deal with spiritual matters by calling on their

³²³ I-02/7

respective religious-and-ritual practitioners.³²⁴ The vast majority of the Nepali population firmly believes in spiritual connections between earthly practices and spiritual reactions and their consequences in daily life as well as the entire reincarnation cycle (*samsara*), and the importance of following the life-cycle rituals (*sanskar*). This covers Hinduism, Buddhism and the animistic/shamanistic beliefs in spirits in Nepal, all the traditional religions of Nepal.

Conversely, when people become Christians they deal with these matters by filtering out non-acceptable practices. There are different approaches to this. One is a changed personal lifestyle. Another is a pro-active strategic prayer method which goes beyond superficial praying for sick people and daily needs. In fact, Nepali Christians in their general mission approach to their own people have learned not to be immature in their prayers, as advanced during the times of the Gorkha Mission (Section 3.3.1). Pastor Dhan Kumar Gurung outlines a framework for strategic prayer tested in practice (Section 4.1.5). The foundation for the framework is a socio-religious understanding of a realm of spirits combined with the Great Commission, which all Christian Nepalis take seriously.³²⁵ There are spiritual weapons, primarily prayer and worship, that are a church task, not a task for individuals. The Tamang calls such a spiritual realm a pantheon where the *bombo* has various possibilities to manoeuvre the spirits.

Nepali Christians (baptised) believe there are negative consequences of crossing the entrance to a temple/*stupa*, as Pastor Gurung says, ‘In fact, I would not go into the

³²⁴ For example the Tamang practitioners who are called the *lama*, the *bombo* and the *lambu* and the traditional Gurung priests or shamans who are called *pachyu* and *klehpri*; the Tamang and the Gurung make up 83% of the informants interviewed

³²⁵ The Great Commission is the last of Jesus’ commands to his disciples before he ascended to Heaven. It says: Bible: Matthew 28:18-20, ‘And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”’

temple' (Section 4.1.5). However, they do walk in the surrounding areas, for example outside a *stupa* or in a temple area, to pray for protection against harming spirits and to bind evil spirits to accelerate the propagation of Christian belief. In this way, Christians spiritually cleanse a given area from opposing spirits by singing songs, worshipping Jesus Christ and binding the dominating spirits.³²⁶ Spiritually, they measure out the property where the church is, or is going to be, and where they intend to preach the word of God by praying in the area prior to disseminating this Christian belief. Christians are careful to observe a respectful attitude towards other religions in the area to avoid unnecessary spiritual or human repercussions and to keep a good and friendly attitude to people in the neighbourhood. Although Christians believe Jesus Christ is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, there are rules to observe and unnecessary provocations against traditional religious people are not the fruits of love as such actions are inherently human and will not be associated with any blessings of God.³²⁷ In cases of unfriendly spiritual oppression of the church, the general strategy is to pray for protection like Pabitra Kumal (Section 4.1.1). The church is active, meanwhile, in freeing demon possessed people, and many informants have accounts of people who have been freed and who subsequently became Christians. 31% of the informants had such accounts.³²⁸

Pastor Gurung and his friend decided to go to Chandrawadi to pray. He does not further explain why exactly this area was selected, only that he gained intelligence about the

³²⁶ In the same way they also cleanse a room or a house before they move to a new place by praying and inviting Jesus Christ to stay there with them

³²⁷ This phrase, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, is often quoted in prayers and other places. It is a quotation from the bible. Bible: Revelation 17:14 'They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.' Revelation 17:16 'On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.'

³²⁸ I-01/15; I-02/4; I-04/8; I-04/37; I-09/14; I-10/5; I-11/3-4; I-24/11; I-30/16; I-31/7; I-32/7

area through his visits and through prayer prior to establishing the church.³²⁹ He and his team were able to interact with people in a friendly way and one family became Christian. This procedure is normal among Christians in Nepal and this is an account of strategic prayer.

4.2 Other Accounts Leading to Change of Allegiance

John Lofland and Rodney Stark have provided useful input in the area of conversion.³³⁰ Their fieldwork, at the beginning of the 1960s, in the Unification Church, produced material as a seven-stage model articulated in general terms. Lewis Rambo clarifies that they were ‘the first social scientists to note the importance of crisis in the conversion process.’³³¹ In another paper I wrote out a simplified version of Lofland and Stark’s seven-stage model, shown below.³³²

³²⁹ Pastor Gurung does not say so directly, but it is a normal practice to go and pray and to observe the village; look at the people, the in-roads, the rivers, the temples, how people live, their main trade etc. Then pray for God’s blessing over the place

³³⁰ Lofland, 1965, 864

³³¹ Rambo, 1993, 47

³³² Kirchheiner, 2006, Section 2.2

Lofland & Stark's Seven-Stage Conversion Model Simplified

Stages 1-3 represent the 'predisposing conditions'. Lofland & Stark assert that, prior to launching into a religious quest, a pre-convert has undergone a longer crisis. He has been experiencing tensions and is frustrated in his aspirations.

Stages 4-6 represent the 'situational contingencies'. The timing for the establishing of affective bonding with a cult is important; however it is not critical as crises of the type sketched by Lofland & Stark are likely to be long-lasting. After an encounter with a cult, this may lead to a 'verbal conversion'.

Stage 7 designates the 'total conversion' into the cult. The Lofland & Stark model reaches a crucial point here, distinguishing between a 'verbal convert' and a 'total convert'.³³³

Table 10: Lofland & Stark's Seven-Stage Conversion Model - Simplified

Verbal converts will talk about their conversion but are not willing to invest personal resources in the cult, and basically they are of no use to the cult until they become missionaries ('dependable adherents' or 'deployable agents').³³⁴ This does not happen until stage seven where the (verbal) convert is subjected to extensive influence from the cult and included in its activities. Eventually, he will give in and convert totally. Lofland and Stark questioned at which point a person really has changed his allegiance and devised the term 'operational conversion' to acknowledge the problem of 'verbal converts' vs. 'total converts'. David Gellner writes analogously that 'one can convert without the experience of conversion' as a formal or technical conversion.³³⁵ Rebecca Sachs Norris observed from an anthropological point of view that a convert initially understands the new religion through his or her old worldview and not in the same way

³³³ Kirchheiner, 2006, 9-10

³³⁴ Lofland and Stark use the term 'deployable agent', however, Snow and Phillips in their critical reassessment use the term a 'dependable adherent'

³³⁵ Gellner, 2005, 757

as the one who is already a practitioner. Converting, she maintains, involves far more than the mere change of religion. It involves an almost holistic set of rituals, symbols and practices developed in the 'cult'.³³⁶ William Merrill thinks along the same lines as he points to a changed lifestyle by looking for evidence among the converted in relation to their devotion, obedience and behaviour to see how they conform to Christian standards.³³⁷

Religious conversion theory is outside the scope of this thesis; however, Lofland and Stark's model is an early but still potent model which many researchers find useful, and points to two important issues. One is to emphasise the predisposing conditions which can be summarised in one word, crisis. The other is the change from verbal to total convert. In the following, there are three sections which deal with different notions when Nepalis change their allegiance to Jesus Christ.

4.2.1 Storytelling

The previous section (Section 4.1) demonstrated a series of crises among traditional religious people prior to their conversion through sickness and spiritual afflictions which motivated a Christian pursuit alongside their healing process. Such crises are normal in single conversions according to Lofland and Stark's stage-model. The reasons for crises can be innumerable as also are reasons for changes of allegiance. One way is through storytelling. Sukuman Lama said:

³³⁶ Norris, 2003, 171; Lofland, 1965, 863-864

³³⁷ Merrill, 1993, 137

Love Declaration & Storytelling

I love Buddhist people because after I received Jesus Christ I have a peace and a joy in my heart. And I love them with God's love. Especially nowadays I focus on Tamang Buddhism in order to share the gospel. Most of the believers (in Asha Church) have become Christian from Buddhist background because we love them with the true love of Jesus. Particularly Buddhist people's forefathers are from Tibet. We migrated from Karung in Tibet to Nepal. But when we shared about God's grace to the Buddhists then they would hear eagerly, and understand that our forefathers did not come from Tibet but rather were created by God. Now we understand that our forefathers did not come from Karung but from Adam (they understand that they may have migrated from Karung, but that their forefathers are from Adam, there are no conflicts here). Hearing this creation story many Buddhist people became Christian. Until today we have been walking the wrong way. When they have found out that they are on the right track they become happy.

Table 11: Love Declaration & Storytelling ³³⁸

There is much information in this data segment, but more information is always wanted. According to Sukuman Lama, this story brings not only a single person, but multiple people to Christ. Sukuman's message is to reveal to the Tamang their ancestral past which is magnificent news for building up their identity. Stories can be told in different ways, and Sukuman is an authoritative man in a high position in the church adding weight and conviction to the story. The most important information given to the reader is the love declaration to the Buddhists in the beginning. Lofland and Stark's model proposes a life development entailing some predisposing conditions of which crisis is the most important and necessary in some form. The key concepts are the creation story, God's mercy and the informant's own love declaration. Any or all of these may have an impact on a traditional religious person who listens and who consequently may convert

³³⁸ I-14/7

to Christ. Sukuman's love for the Buddhists and his focus on sharing the love of Christ is significant and at the centre of any genuine evangelistic proactive approach because it signals a welcoming and trustworthy atmosphere.

4.2.2 Healing of People

There are twenty-eight coded segments from eighteen informants containing healing stories of different kinds. In this section, I will offer one story by Aryal Bahadur Tamang from Nuwakot who is one of the church leaders. He is thirty-nine years old and has four daughters and two sons. His conversion testimony:

At that time my oldest daughter she became seriously sick, and I offered to my gods and goddesses chicken and goats, but nothing happened. I used to call the *jhankri* and particularly the *lambu*, and through him I used to offer chicken and goats. In 1990 I heard a praying group in my village. My wife took my oldest daughter to the home of believers for prayer. After prayer the daughter became better. Prayer continued and after two weeks my daughter was completely well. When my daughter was healed my wife told me that we had to leave our old religion especially the offering and sacrifice. Praying is good because when we took our daughter to the believers, they prayed and now our daughter she became well. Therefore we have to follow their religion. I came to know that offering everything did not accomplish anything, but they simply prayed and we did not pay anything, then our daughter was healed. Therefore I have decided to follow this new faith. After the healing of my daughter I received Jesus Christ as my lord and saviour in the summer of 1990.³³⁹ I came to learn that Jesus had done everything for us. And now I am continuously working as a helper in the church.³⁴⁰

This narration is typical of many conversion stories, particularly from earlier days. It still happens this way, but open-air evangelism and youth work have become powerful and reach many people. This story includes a financial aspect which is an important addition to similar accounts. There are various reasons why non-Christians consult

³³⁹ Summer 1990, converted from BS2047 the month of Ashod

³⁴⁰ I-26/6

Christians for help. Blandine Ripert, during her studies among the Tamang, noticed concepts which contributed to form the basis for the following more general points:³⁴¹

- Nepalis are forced to pay for the service provided by a traditional religious practitioner. This can be relatively expensive as a *jhankri* or a *lambu* may decide to sacrifice an animal which has to be provided in addition to payment for the service. The Christians do not demand any payment for prayers which please many Nepalis.
- Occasionally, when unrelenting physical or psychic disorders fail to be treated by local religious practitioners, the afflicted individual turns to the Christians for healing. The Christian integrity reigning among Christians, the promises of Jesus and the authority of the bible, together convince many Nepalis that the Christians have healing powers.
- Some Nepalis believe that Christianity gives credibility in a globalised world.
- One of the advantages the Christian belief system offers is its intelligibility.

For these reasons, Christianity is a better worldview than traditional Tamang religious belief or other traditional beliefs in Nepal, and conversions happen for what seem to be pragmatic reasons, according to Ripert. Usually, Nepalis do not work at clarifying dogmatic problems. The general respect for the written word, i.e. from the Buddhists, tones down the critical theology. Questions are not eliminated but the Nepalese belief is strong and uncomplicated. The indigenous people (*Janajati*) and the mainstream Hindus (*Parbatiya*) intuitively know that God as the Creator must be Spirit as they are used to the notion of ‘power’ (*shakti*) from the secret and sacred word of the religious practitioners (*lamas, bombos etc.*) and their interaction with selected spirits and invisible actors of the pantheon of Nepal.³⁴² Nepalis, to some extent, know that they need a saviour because their concept of sin (*pap*) as a, here negative, deed has a problematic impact on later circumstances (*karma*) and as such are linked together in most traditional Nepalese religious thinking with an almost endless number of

³⁴¹ Ripert, 2001, 138-141

³⁴² Holmberg, 2007, 173-213

reincarnations. Traditional religions even have different kinds of ‘saviours’ in the form of Hindu *avatars*, gods who descend to rectify problems in their righteous and religious Hindu living (*dharma*). Therefore, the basic theological notions of God as a triune God is already at hand for Christian belief offered to the Tamang and many *Janajati* and *Parbatiya* generally.³⁴³ In addition Nepalis are usually unpretentious and straightforward as they have a thorough, intuitive, understanding, spiritually. Aryal Bahadur and his family welcome this new belief which works, is logical and cheap. The issue of globalisation does not obtain in this case. In the next section I cite two examples of healing of animals.

4.2.3 Healing of Animals

There are seven accounts from the fieldwork about animals which are healed through Christian prayer. This has significance in relation to the influence of Christians in the local communities because animals, particularly cattle, goats and water buffaloes, are of great financial and practical value to any household. It has implications as some become Christians when they see animals healed. Sushma Shree Gurung, a sixty-seven year old woman, answered the following question, *What made you believe in Jesus Christ?*:

I got in contact with Christians through my youngest son and [Ms] Gurung, (the first lady who started the fellowship in this town of Tanahun, her name is known) who is one of her relatives. [Ms Gurung] said, even though our flesh will die, our spirit will never die. She said, ‘you will be healed’. One very important thing happened, my goat gave birth to a little one, but it would not drink the milk. [Ms Gurung] said that if you pray for the goat he will drink the milk from

³⁴³ The basic theological notion is particularly at hand among the Hindus as Brahman, Vishnu and Shiva form the Hindu triune god giving the conception of a trinity

the mother, and she prayed for the small goat and that goat began to drink the mother's milk.³⁴⁴

She believed when this kid started to drink milk. No one in her family was Christian except her uncle.

Another woman, Sangita Lama, is twenty-two years old and unmarried. She has two mothers because her father had two sons with his first wife who became seriously ill and died. Her father became mentally upset because of their death, according to her, and married another woman. She has two brothers and two sisters. The following two quotations inform about her relationship with her family and give her testimony respectively:

My relationships with my mothers are good and we all live together. I grew up in this village. I got my teacher education in Trisuli Bazar. After my eighth standard I moved to Trisuli Bazar and I got my education from there. I lived there five years with friends; I came back two years ago.³⁴⁵

My father was a persecutor; my uncle was a Christian meaning my father persecuted his own brother. But one day his (the father's) own younger son became sick, seriously ill, at that time he did not have any money to pay the *jhankri* or get the son to the hospital. At that time my uncle came and prayed for him, my brother, and he was healed and we started to attend the church. After some years our water buffalo got sick, we prayed and it was healed. Seeing that miracle also my father started to attend the church. At that time they started Saturday service in Hari Prasad's home (elder). At that time, there was no church building, I was five-six years old, some of the believers were not yet Christian they came and persecuted us, and they tore the bible apart. Although I was just a little child I attended the house fellowship regularly. I got a chance to pray.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁴ I-34/8

³⁴⁵ I-24/4

³⁴⁶ I-24/5

Sangita's father did not convert at the recovery of his son but he converted at the healing of his water buffalo some years later. Many have changed their allegiance to Jesus Christ through the experience of a healing either at first hand or second hand. Other people are satisfied by the healing and stay with their traditional religion. Rekha Tamang, a twenty-six year old woman, said that, 'when they get sick they come to church and get healed. I have seen so many people like that, but they come to church to get healed, when they are healed they leave again.'³⁴⁷ The reason why Sangita's father converted is not clear except that a water buffalo is important, but a son is also important one would think. Any attempts to clarify his decision will end up as guesswork. From these two accounts it is evident that Christians pray for animals with seriousness.

4.2.4 Summary – Crisis

The sociology of conversion, as outlined by Lofland and Stark (Table 10, p. 152), requires observing at least two notions in a conversion process. One is the notion of crisis, the other is the genuineness of conversion. Lofland and Stark acknowledged the problem of identifying a total conversion. Norris added another concept when pointing to the general shift of lifestyle as people convert. Even so, the general message as conveyed from the interviews and participant observation (p. 32) is a seamless shift from verbal conversion to total conversion. The reason is that this shift happens when people are baptised. There are usually significant requirements for baptisms in Nepal. Baptismal candidates participate in months-long baptismal courses to ensure knowledge about basic Christian doctrine and Christian lifestyle, and to safeguard awareness about the consequences of possible persecution to prevent any backsliding. As Ian Gibson

³⁴⁷ I-03/23

says, ‘becoming a Christian in Nepal is thus a conversion in the fullest sense of the word.’³⁴⁸ Non-baptised people participate regularly in the church services and in house fellowships but are not reckoned to be true Christians. Indeed, often Hindus with religious marks on their forehead (*tika*) who have just performed ritual Hindu prayers (*pūja*) go to church and occasionally also join house fellowship meetings. Obviously carnal Christians exist (Section 5.2.2.2) but due to their lifestyle they are also easily identified. Therefore, the second notion, which is the seventh and last stage in the model, is rarely problematic in Nepalese contexts.

The most significant statement in this section (Section 4.2) is Sukuman’s love declaration to the Buddhists (Table 11). The fact that he emphasises his love in connection with his evangelism technique portrays his character and focus. Therefore, when he begins talking about the migration of Tamang and about God’s grace to the Buddhists, they are attentive. Although this particularly concerns the Tamang, the idea can be extrapolated to most of the *Janajati*. These people and parallel people, the *Madeshi*, *Kiranti*, or more broadly the NFDIN (Section 2.7.2, p. 49) groups, may all in varying degrees feel less worthy than the *Parbatiya* or at least than the twice-born (high-caste people). Therefore, when Sukuman and like people surround them with a welcoming and understanding atmosphere, not only among the Tamang, and even pray for their sick animals, their goats and water buffalos, without pay (Section 4.2.3), people feel defended, justified, worthy and accepted. It does not mean that they change social status, on the contrary. Devi Bahadur Tamang (p. 112) says: ‘we as Christians do have a little lower status in society, we are overlooked, and we are like low-caste. But we are not from the low-caste; we are from the third caste being a Tamang, those who

³⁴⁸ Gibson, 2014, 43

follow a foreign religion (Table 4, p. 62).³⁴⁹ Therefore, in terms of social status, it does not help to be a Christian, but the point is also more basic, to be vindicated from what could look like a crisis.

Blandine Ripert writes that the Tamang feel excluded by the central Indo-Nepal power.³⁵⁰ When they convert they convert to Christianity and not Hinduism because they regard Christianity from a pragmatic point of view which includes finances, functionality, universal credibility and simplicity (p. 156). Ripert may have a good point, but I would like to combine this with Lofland and Stark's model and Sukuman's storytelling or love declaration (Table 11, p. 154). The *Janajati* (Section 2.7.2, p. 47) are primarily non-Hindu indigenous ethnic groups who, therefore, do not belong to the mainstream Hindu *Parbatiya* ethnic group and do not enjoy all privileges of the *Parbatiya*. This reflection is of great significance because it may help shed light on Sukuman's claim that people convert due to the creation story. It is axiomatic that groups of people, the *Janajati*, with this lower status in relation to Hindu socio-polity, may feel vindicated by knowing more about their paternal ancestry. Many *Janajati* in the same way as low-caste and *Madeshi* groups (groups of people in the eastern Terai) knowingly or unknowingly may undergo a kind of crisis by having been dismissed from being fully able to participate in planning and being part of developing the socio-political structure in their own land. Things are getting better through interest groups like NEFIN and NFDIN (p. 49) which identify many *Janajati* with predisposing conversion conditions in accordance with Lofland and Stark's seven-stage model. In

³⁴⁹ I-04/12;

³⁵⁰ Ripert, 2001, 140

this way, by combining Ripert's pragmatism, Lofland and Stark's model and Sukuman's storytelling, the notion of crisis may emerge among the *Janajati*.³⁵¹

4.3 Conclusion

Spiritual matters are real to Nepalis whether they follow traditional religions or whether they have become Christians, meaning for them gods and spirits are not part of a different world beyond they are part of this world of humans and nature. Along with traditional practitioners, particularly the *lambru* and the *bombo* among the Tamang, the church and individual Christians have demonstrated great potency from the perspective of providing service to spiritually afflicted people or to people who suffer severe or chronic illness, and a great number of informants have testified about spiritual authority in the name of Jesus Christ for their benefit.

Underlying factors connected to conflicts translate into Christian prayer. Christian prayers unfold into different groupings: there are specific prayers for protection; other kinds of Christian prayers give rise to anxiety among traditional religious people as they fear malevolent responses from traditional gods and goddesses; healing prayers and strategic prayers entail many issues like prayer for housing and against strongholds. With this evidence it is conclusive that Christians are knowledgeable about spiritual powers, what they face and what they are dealing with when they exercise authority through prayers.

As Christians, when evangelising and praying for people, sometimes are (mis)taken for being another kind of traditional ritual specialist, a shaman or a traditional priest, it is assumed that they have good spiritual insight both from a Christian and a traditional

³⁵¹ Gellner, 2004

worldview that enables them to be knowledgeable people in society. From this, many Christians seem to have opportunities to be key-players in spiritual matters.

The conversion theory indicates that conversion is linked with crisis, either sociologically through personal crisis from spiritual afflictions and other types of illness and challenges or anthropologically through cultural factors giving predisposing conditions to conversion. The value of love as a quality and a behaviour emerged as an essential factor. This may be an anticipation of events but this value of love is significant and will be mentioned where appropriate. It has become my conviction based on statements from informants that meeting people in an atmosphere of love and with acts of love is imperative for the propagation of Christian belief in Nepal. In this chapter there was one example, but there are other examples later. Thus the following keywords have been identified, prayer, love and crisis. The latter, crisis, is central also in conversion theory. In the light of the statements and accounts articulated by the informants, Christians of the evangelical church are integrated into Nepalese society.

This chapter of conversion gave a good introduction to the Christian and traditional lives of Nepal, and the challenges many Nepalis are facing concerning sickness and various kinds of afflictions. With this in mind the next chapter follows naturally as it concerns ways and methods that Christians use to overcome socio-religious challenges from traditional religious people by negotiating their boundaries.

CHAPTER 5

5. Negotiating the Boundaries

Up until now I have been setting up the context, I have been dealing with history and conversion, I have been dealing with topics which have been obviously central to Nepali Christian experience but were not generated through Grounded Theory Analysis (GTA). I am now moving from the part of the data section in which I have laid out the context, the history and the conversion of the Christians in order to understand what is going to come in the GTA part of the data section. The topics I am dealing with in this and the next chapters were chosen precisely because the data suggested that they are the most important to my informants.

In this chapter I demonstrate that a key area of Nepalese Christianity is the adaptation of Christians into Nepalese society. For many Christians this is not an easy exercise, for others it may be a natural part of their new change of allegiance. According to the interviewees, a considerable minority (40%) express passion and affection for the country of Nepal and pride to be Nepalis.³⁵² This insight that a large minority of Christians explicitly state strong emotional feelings towards their country and identify themselves fully as Nepalis is significant because it implies that they have no intention of being secluded or segregated from the rest of the people but want to be an integrated part of society. Christians have adapted to a practise where Christianity prevails yet the general Nepalese way of living is preserved. The question is how well this adaptation or integration works, and whether there are issues and notions within Christian belief that

³⁵² I-01, I-03, I-04, I-07, I-08, I-09, I-10, I-22, I-24, I-26, I-27, I-28, I-29, I-35

have been compromised, and how well the Nepalese way of living has been preserved. There are many socio-religious factors involved in forming a vibrant Nepalese Christian culture sustainable in a traditional Nepalese culture.

The analysis is relevant and essential with respect to the research question: In what ways and to what extent have Christians of Asha Church retained or changed their way of living after they have become Christians?

The examination is central to understanding Nepalese Christianity and has developed from Grounded Theory Analysis (GTA); the majority of data emerged from an important category (FORMING CHRISTIAN IDENTITY, Figure 9). This category was formed by three high-level concepts and encapsulates issues like customs and habits of life that have changed.

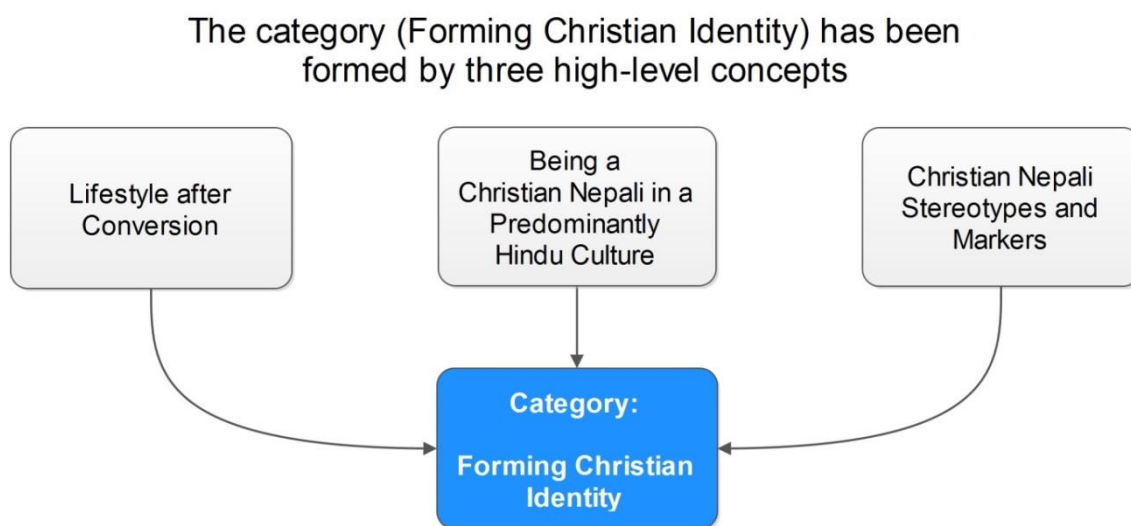


Figure 9: Grounded Theory: Forming Christian Identity

From the data belonging to this category family, a demand is emerging to identify important methods used to negotiate socio-religious boundaries based on the emphasis

informants give. I will explore how boundaries are negotiated between the Christian and the traditional way of living. Some boundaries have already been dealt with in the history and conversion chapters (Chapters 3 and 4). I will look into Christian Nepalese attitudes and tactics to overcoming problems. In order to deal with this examination a useful tool has been devised, it is called a *sanskriti-sanskar* polarisation tool and is shown on the diagram below (Figure 11).

This chapter looks specifically at the outworking and definition of this *sanskriti-sanskar* polarisation tool which supports the identification of acceptable and non-acceptable cultural practices from a Nepalese Christian perspective (Section 5.1). These cultural practices are identified particularly by examining two strong Christian markers, intoxicants and the use of rituals (Section 5.2). Christian markers in general are prone to change over time not least under different rules of government which are discussed (Section 5.3). These points identify the Christian's new life situation of negotiating difficult boundaries which are a natural continuation of the previous chapter that examined the most frequent reasons for conversion to Christianity, often in the shadow of crises and various spiritual encounters.

5.1 Sanskriti and Sanskar

To illustrate the way decision making among the Christians takes place when they negotiate the boundaries between a given Christian lifestyle and the traditional Nepalese culture a simple tool has been developed. The tool consists of two Nepalese terms, *sanskriti* and *sanskar* which are simply placed on either side of a horizontal line as two opposite poles (Figure 11).

The Category (Nepali Culture & Traditional Religions) was formed by two High-Level Concepts: The Cultural Areas of Sanskriti and Sanskar

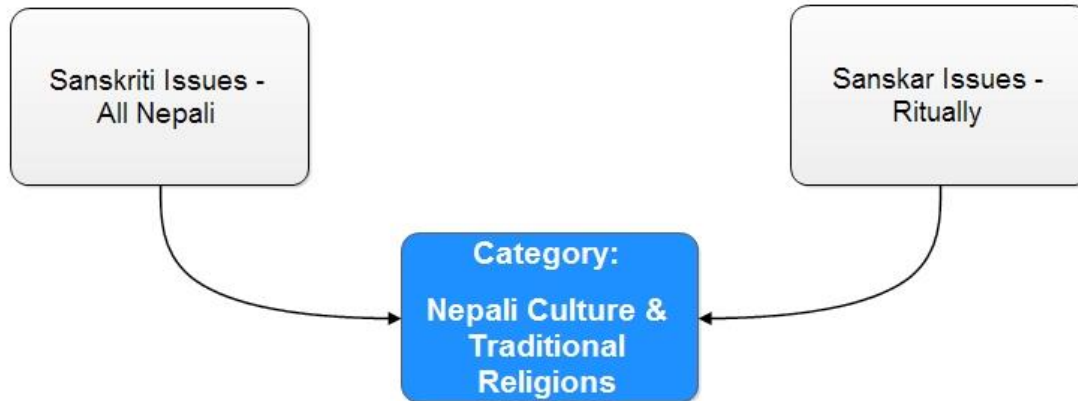


Figure 10: Grounded Theory: Nepalese culture & Traditional Religions

Below, the concepts of *sanskriti* and *sanskar* are defined. These definitions have been adapted from general Nepalese definitions of *sanskriti* and *sanskar* to serve the purpose of a tool in this thesis to facilitate understanding of the line of thinking in Christians.

The formation of the poles is outlined in the GTA category (NEPALESE CULTURE & TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS) where the notion of *sanskriti* and what it includes is clarified, and similarly with the notion or the cultural area of *sanskar* (Figure 10). The results are shown in the *sanskriti-sanskar* pole-boxes (Figure 11) to which I have also added a few additional relevant ideas. This category is used primarily to develop this polarisation tool which, as we shall see, turns out to be useful in support of the analysis of negotiation of boundaries in both of the cultural areas of *sanskriti* and *sanskar*.

Sanskriti is considered to be the umbrella culture of Nepal under which every Nepalese caste and culture, knowingly or unknowingly, is subsumed. *Sanskriti* comes from Sanskrit, a language in which many sacred Hindu writings have been written and from

which other languages originate.³⁵³ Often Nepalese *Sanskriti* portrays or outlines Nepalese religious history, wood carvings, temples, festivals, their complex religious ways of living, and the goddess Kumari. This thesis aims to step back from this traditional all-embracing cultural aspect of *sanskriti* which includes many facets of sacred acts, and define it as Nepalese daily behaviour and cultural codices but without religious rites and rituals; thus considering it as the daily life of people such as the way of talking, working, dressing, eating etc. Panchayat signifiers also play a role in understanding it in this way as they harmonised people and culture into a national *sanskriti* (Section 3.1.2, p. 65). This national culture, *sanskriti*, comprises, therefore, inter-relational behaviour including appearance and common habits like wearing the typical Nepali hat (*topi*) and eating classic Nepali rice and lentils (*dalbhat*) but also wider nationally distinguishable notions like humour, the unique look of the rice fields and the impression of the mountains, general frustration over power shedding, and daily conversation topics.

Sanskara is the religious rites or rituals of Hinduism. Julius Lipner more specifically writes that *sanskara* is ‘a ritual intended to purify and transform the individual at particular phases of life’s journey.’ He says that ‘by the action of the *sanskara*, the individual is progressively and cumulatively protected from hostile influences and made whole.’ This entails protection from evil spirits as mentioned in a previous chapter (Chapter 4).³⁵⁴ Bal Krishna Sharma writes that *sanskara* is ‘one of the sixteen life-cycle

³⁵³ Sanskrit is a language from which other languages originate such as Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Gujarati, Nepali, Marathi, Bengali, Rajasthani, Assamese, Sinhalese, Maldivian, Romany and other languages. Hindu scripts in Sanskrit are Bhagavad Gita, Vedas, Mahabharata, Upanishads, Puranas, Epics and other books. Sanskrit scholars primarily use the language today for chanting

³⁵⁴ Lipner, 1994, 264-265

rituals which perfect and refine the person.³⁵⁵ Mark Pickett has also related his experience of the importance of some of these rituals.³⁵⁶ These are the general understandings of *sanskar*. To be more detailed about this term requires a dogmatic approach to Hinduism. To be useful as a tool in this thesis, *sanskar* is taken as Lipner and Sharma define them but even more comprehensively to cover all the religious aspects of Nepalese culture of daily rituals and rites, including the work of religious practitioners. Thus daily rituals include making a red religious mark on the forehead usually of turmeric powder (*tika*), performing prayer rituals to honour and worship deities (*puja*), offering sacrificed food to the idols (*prasad*), ancestral worship, going to the local shrine or sanctuary and, for the women, putting red cosmetic powder or more traditionally turmeric or red chili powder in the parting of the hair (*sindoor*). Other kinds of religious activities such as calling on ritual specialists to perform on certain occasions are considered *sanskar* because all these acts are used to purify, transform and protect according to traditional Nepalese thinking.

³⁵⁵ Sharma, 2013, 205

³⁵⁶ Pickett, 2014, 4, 60

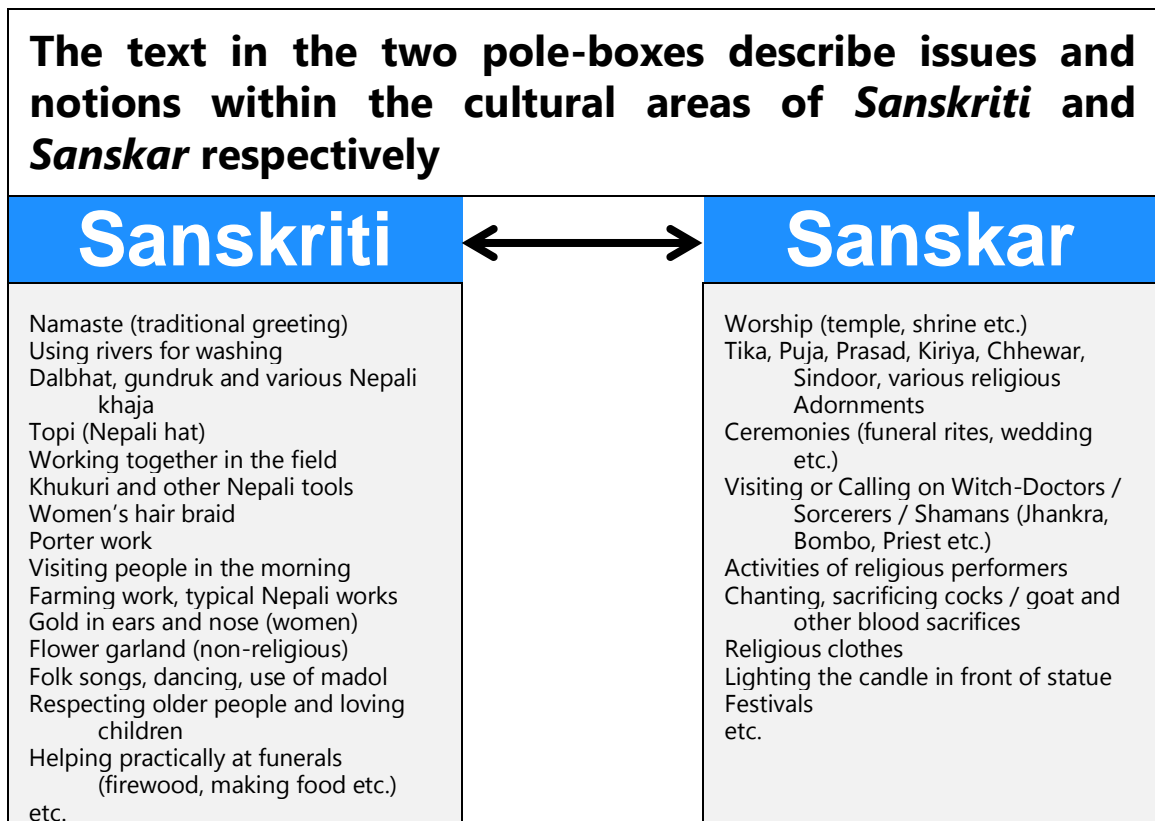


Figure 11: Sanskriti - Sanskar Polarisation Tool

Rice, for example, is clearly *sanskriti* as it is a common Nepali food, but as it is holy to the twice-born or high-castes (*tagadhari*) and eaten ritually some might argue that rice is instead or also *sanskar*.³⁵⁷ The reason rice is seen as *sanskriti* is that for most ordinary people it is simply food. Therefore, Christians eat without problems, but never participate in *prasad* (sanctified food to idols). Regarding the argument of defining rice as *sanskriti* even though it is *sanskar* to the twice-born, a similar claim could be put forward to define a *sanskar* marker like *tika* as *sanskriti* and thereby legitimise it for Christians to use. However, the two situations are not comparable: although *tika* as an isolated mark on Christians is not expected to have any power over them it does signal

³⁵⁷ The 'twice-born' is a designation given to those who are wearing the sacred thread over their shoulder who are the high-castes (Brahmins, Chhetris, Thakuris etc.). They are called twice-born as they are born once, and when they receive the sacred thread they are reckoned to be re-born, thus born twice. They are therefore also called the wearers of the sacred thread

spiritual belonging; this is the way Christians have interpreted it. Conversion means an change of allegiance and commitment to another worldview. *Tika* in Nepal is a symbol of traditional allegiance and loyalty to originally Hinduism and subsequently the Nepalese traditional way of living. Taking on *tika* signals traditional religious belonging. Therefore, Christians cannot put on *tika* but can happily eat rice.

This demonstrates that there is a tension and synthesis between *sanskriti* and *sanskar*, even though on the diagram (Figure 11) they are separated as poles, identifying Nepalese culture in a dialectical way as two poles. The individual Christian often needs to make abstract distinctions and decisions or discuss with other Christians what is right and wrong as per the *tika* and rice examples above. Often folk songs and dances originate from a religious background (*sanskar*) but Christians join in because they have become part of the general festive gatherings at dance festivals and family gatherings (*sanskriti*).³⁵⁹ Therefore folk songs and dancing are placed under *sanskriti* in the polarisation diagram (Figure 11). The informant below, Binod Tamang (p. 173), says, in referring to Nepali clothing, that Christians can wear the Nepali hat (*topi*) but not put on the mark on the forehead (*tika*). He also mentions other cultural issues like ritual hair-cutting and food sacrificed to idols. Gathering this kind of information as it becomes available produces the *sanskriti-sanskar* polarisation tool. Obviously there are dances that are performed as part of religious acts which may not be *sanskriti*. Pastor Gurung says:

Another tradition for the Gurung people is this, the old people will sing a song and automatically their eyes will close, and they will dance. This will happen over a period of three days, on and off. They will dance, slowly, slowly. There will be a group of dancers. They are all virgins. If they open their eyes they cannot remember anything. But they will wake up between each song. They will dance in the morning, afternoon and in the evening on and off. They cannot

remember, their minds are constantly focusing on the singing, on the group who are singing the song.³⁵⁸

This kind of dancing and singing seems to be different. The first impression is that it is religious and therefore part of Gurung *sanskar* but the final decision in matters like these is for the Christian community in Nepal to decide.

The grounds for making a distinction between *sanskriti* and *sanskar* was not made by me but comes from some of the more articulate informants, pastor Gurung (p. 273), Devi Bahadur (p. 175) and particularly Binod Tamang, a young YWAM leader in Kathmandu, who said and teaches along the lines:

In Nepal there are two words *sanskriti* and *sanskar*, *sanskriti* is culture and *sanskar* is rituals. What we teach as youth pastor in the church is that we should follow the culture but we should not follow the rituals. We look similar. We have Nepalese culture. We cannot say now I am a Christian, therefore I cannot wear this hat (*topi*). We look similar in the *sanskriti* but we are so strong to say 'no' to some of the rituals because they are connected to the gods and goddesses. If they ask us to wear *tika* we say 'no'. If they offer us to eat some of the things that are offered to the idols we say 'no'. From the beginning we have said to the Hindu people that we do not eat these things. They (the Hindus) do not mind and gradually they have come to know that these Christian people do not eat the offered things but still we come together in the *sanskriti*, for example in the Nepali dance festival, we come together, we talk, - all the interesting things. I have Hindu and Buddhist friends, but when they serve at the *pujas* and they offer me to eat something they give me different things, - unoffered things because they know I am Christian. I still go to them. The other day I went to a ceremony, a *chhewar*, where they cut all the hair. But I do not get involved in the rituals. I went because they were friends of mine. His friend had just died the other day, and I went to the funeral but was very clear of some of the rituals. As a Nepali Christian I know what to be aware of.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁸ I-35/10

³⁵⁹ I-30/8

Every Nepali Christian must of necessity operate a distinction of this kind because they have to decide which things they will allow to participate in their spiritual and practical lives. This distinction which in this thesis has been called *sanskriti* and *sanskar* is understood by every Nepali Christian although they may not use that language; some may not even be familiar with these Hindu words.

This distinction is not new. Mark Pickett writes about the Muslims joining the all-Nepali festival *Dashain*, they will not wear the red *tika*, but interestingly they are substituting it with colourless cooking oil. Pickett says that the red mark would compromise their identity as Muslims.³⁶⁰ N.J. Allen writes that almost all Thulungs, a Rai group within the Kiranti people (p. 58), wear scalp-locks on their shaven heads, a ritual act only Hindus do. Meanwhile these Thulungs willingly did this to emphasise that they were Hindus and not Muslims. Muslims would not do such a ritual shaving of their heads.³⁶¹ Bal Krishna Sharma offers an interesting quote from a Brahmin respondent who has become Christian in a ‘split’ family where the rest is Hindu, his father has died and as a Christian he is not allowed to touch the dead Hindu bodies (Table 26, p. 273). He is distressed as he does not know what to do, after all it is his father, part of it goes, ‘... I did not feel right to participate in the Hindu funerary rites and thought that by doing this would become an insult to Hinduism itself. If I do not confess to be a Hindu, then participating in Hindu funerary rites would mean a mockery to both the religions.’³⁶² The further analysis of this situation I refer to Sharma but it is interesting that he says ‘both religions’. From Pickett and Allen’s observations we learn that other Nepali groups, the Muslims, have been wrestling with the schisms between

³⁶⁰ Pickett, 2004b

³⁶¹ Allen, 1997, 304

³⁶² Sharma, 2013, 122

regular rituals (*sanskar*) and acceptable Nepalese traditions (*sanskriti*) but from Sharma's observation we learn that some Christians believe that Hindus in a reverse way may have problems with *sanskar* as they do not allow Christians to participate in some of their *sanskar* rituals. The distinction between culture and religion is vital.

Pastor Gurung, Binod, Devi Bahadur and the majority of informants contributed to an understanding of this diagram with the two poles of *sanskriti* and *sanskar*. So with this in mind the *sanskriti*–*sanskar* polarisation tool above (Figure 11) was devised, which in reality has a dynamic in the form of a dialectical approach to socio-religious domains. Devi Bahadur says 'In fact it is not so easy to distinguish between culture and ritual (*sanskriti* and *sanskar*). There are religious practices and tradition, but people say this is our culture.'³⁶³ Binod Tamang has, as a leader, understood well, as I see it, the art of navigating as a Christian through traditional ceremonies like funerals, even though these are placed under the *sanskar* pole in the figure, apparently without compromising his faith. Binod has marked out his spiritual territory and declared his willingness to meet together with the traditional Nepalis but on his terms. Conversely there are Christians who stay away from traditional ceremonies like funerals. Indra Kumari (Section 4.1.4, p. 138) replies to the question: *Have you been invited to a wedding ceremony?*

Yes, I have been invited to my brother's wedding ceremony and I went, but the others I haven't gone. We do not put on *tika*; I do not like to go. Before I really liked to go but now I do not like to go. I do not know whether it is because it is Hindu, why I do not know, but if it is Christian I would be very happy to go. I would not go to a funeral ceremony. If my best friend's friend has died and she requests me to

³⁶³ I-04/17

go I will not go. However, if it is a Christian funeral service I would
go.³⁶⁴

Indra Kumari hesitates about participating in Hindu funerals, but Binod signals enthusiasm, and, as we shall see later (p. 273), Pastor Gurung also participates in traditional funerals. Pastor Gurung and Indra Kumari go to the same church in Tanahun yet meet challenges differently. Indra's life has settled after much turmoil, and her work is hard and her income is not expected to be high. Her family is important to her as can be seen from her story, and her best friend is a Hindu so her approach to the traditional religious people is not negative. However, ceremonies and the great number of people who perform rituals seem to make her uneasy. Her present situation is that her family is happy, and although she claimed that Satan cannot touch her anymore (Section 4.1.4) she, I assume, although she did not explicitly say so, does not want to gamble her secure position by going to non-Christian ceremonies like a traditional funeral. It does not seem right to argue whether Binod is more correct than Indra Kumari; it is a matter of mind and conscience how such a boundary is negotiated. They are both Democratic generation Christians and go to the same church, but their individual backgrounds and personalities are different. So to understand the work of this tool, although the cultural area of *sanskara* is usually dominated by rituals which are unacceptable for Christians, careful navigation in *sanskara* territory becomes of great importance; *sanskriti* is usually not a problem except concerning certain issues which will be taken up below. McGavran points out, in regard to Japanese Christians, that they need to consciously

³⁶⁴ I-16/10

cultivate their honoured traditions, but also warns that it can go too far as he has observed.³⁶⁵

With the definition of *sanskriti* and *sanskar* the complexity of anthropological domains is demonstrated, and the polarisation tool will serve to understand Christians better when they negotiate their boundaries.

5.2 Non-Negotiable Issues Negotiated

The early church leaders in the 1950s provided guidelines and rules for their churches and for Christians (Section 3.3.3). Two of the most overt approaches to traditional life were the abstention from traditional rites and rituals (*sanskar*) and refraining from taking intoxicants which is an almost all-Nepalese thing to do (*sanskriti*). The first had its greatest impact on the attitude to *tika*, *puja*, *prasad* (p. 148), going to temples/shrines/stupas and by and large the worship of idols but also any participation in ceremonies like ritual hair-cutting (*chhewar*) and ceremonial death rituals (*kiriya*).³⁶⁶ Since the Christians did not do any of these activities it quickly became clear that they were somehow in opposition to the traditional religious way of living. The other entailed leaving off alcohol (*raksi*), tobacco, gambling and taking drugs.³⁶⁷ Since most Nepalis drink alcohol (*raksi*), these issues are potential problems for the Christians if not managed appropriately. The twice-borns are not supposed to drink, although it is well-known that many among the Chettris and the Brahmins are drinking, and a large number smoke.³⁶⁸ There are other guidelines which mark out Christian behaviour like matrimony only within Christian circles (see Appendix A), but these are the two major

³⁶⁵ McGavran, 1985, 312

³⁶⁶ Sharma, 2013, 66, 100

³⁶⁷ I-02/37, 44

³⁶⁸ Whelpton, 2007, 160

exclusive areas, and the following two sections touch specifically on the issue of the mark on the forehead (*tika*) and alcohol (*raksi*) as the main representatives for these two cultural notions of *sanskar* and *sanskriti*.

On the one hand, Christians cannot be distinguished from the rest, partly because the Christian church is an all-embracing welcoming ‘caste’, a mix of people who have converted from many different castes and partly because they have made an effort to mingle with the traditional religious people (TRP). This creates a close common culture with the rest of the Nepalis with traditional features (*sanskriti*). On the other hand, as the Christian church is a new church incorporating its own new values and, to the vast majority of Nepalis, an unknown life perspective there are bound to be some differences which primarily are detectable on the religious side (*sanskar*) but which also have reverberations in daily life. Regarding the latter it may not be a substantial change in daily socio-religious life as most Nepali farmers, porters and people with traditional craftsmanship, are bound to live in foreseeable ways under given circumstances, and yet most people can recognise Christians, for example, in the bazaar. Indra Kumari replied to this question: ‘*When you go down in the bazaar people know that you are a Christian, right?*’ “Yes, everybody says that, but people treat me as everybody else”.³⁶⁹ Christians are classed under *sanskriti*, and yet the TRP could easily spot this female informant.

Hindus and Buddhists and most Nepali traditional people have visible characteristics and identifying marks. The women’s clothing in the bazaar is typical Nepali which is a long skirt and usually a little red shirt, while around the stomach they wear a long piece

³⁶⁹ I-16/11

of cloth wound several times around their waist in which they keep their money. Alternatively, they may wear a *saree* (a female dress fabricated in one long piece of fabric). They always have a shawl or some clothes over at least one of the shoulders. The hair is braided, occasionally with a red-coloured extension. They usually wear necklaces made up of many strings of small plastic pearls, gold rings, gold earrings, anklets, plastic wristlets and smaller or bigger gold rings in the nose. So far, the Christians may wear exactly the same except that they tend to tone down the use of ornamentation. Traditional Nepali women, but not the Christian women, often put on *tika*, red powder in - married - women's hair in the parting (*sindoor*) and wear amulets of different kinds of semi-precious stones.³⁷⁰ In the bazaar or in the field the difference is not big. The men usually wear a traditional Nepali hat (*topi*) or a western-like cap, and may have put on *tika*, a necklace with an amulet and small earrings. They wear a shirt and some simple trousers. On the feet, most men and women wear flip-flops. Apart from the amulet and ornamentation the Christians wear the same. If a Christian man has converted from one of the twice-born castes (*tagadhari*) the sacred thread has been cut and thrown away.

Christians tend to keep clothing clean and tidy except if they come from the field. Some, particularly the younger people, may wear global or non-Nepali clothes, like sneakers, blue jeans and T-shirt, but such clothes tend to be more expensive. Many ordinary Nepalis also prefer global clothes because they have become popular. Generally, in Nepal, there are many castes and cultures, and clothing is diverse.

³⁷⁰ Gautam, 1994, 259; *Tika*: mark on the forehead; *Sindoor*: red powder in a married woman's hair in the parting

The visible appearance of the Christians compared to the traditional religious people is not very different so a tourist would not be able to spot a Christian in the bazaar or in a bus. However, the secret may lie in the fact that Nepalis are good observers and know their people. They are able to recognise anybody from their own caste. A Gurung informant said that he could always recognise a Gurung, by the way of speaking or the way of walking and by the general gestures and face features. Along the same lines, the Christians may not necessarily be special to look at, however they are slowly forming their own identity which may be noticeable through behaviour and appearance as for example in the bazaar. Indra Kumari carries on in the conversation from above stating that ‘Sometimes I can recognise when people are Christians.’³⁷¹

Markers and Stereotypes Mapped (EXCLUSIVITY)	Birbal Tamang	Bishal Bahadur Tamang	Rekha Tamang	Devi Bahadur Tamang	Ganesh Bahadur Tamang	Tek Bahadur Tamang	Sita Tamang	Srijana Khadka	Surya Tamang	Pabitra Kumal	Bhim Kali Devkota	Chandra Maya Hamal	Hem Kumar Tamang	Sukuman Lama	Sunita Maya Tamang	Indra Kumari BK	Santosh Bahadur BK	Ranjana Thapa	Ganesh Lama	Rita Tamang	Kabita Maya Tamang	Ram Bahadur Tamang	Hari Prasad Tamang	Sangita Lama	Bhuban Tamang	Aryal Bahadur Tamang	Bhim Bahadur Tamang	Ghaman Tamang	Shiva Kumari Tamang	Binod Tamang	Arjun Bahadur Tamang	Gyanu Pokharel Tamang	Deepak Bahadur Tamang	Sushma Ama Gurung	Dhan Kumar Gurung	Totals		
Informants:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35			
Do Not sacrifice to the idols (<i>prasad</i>)	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓																			✓		✓							8	
Do Not take <i>pūja</i> , nor worship idols nor go to the temple					✓			✓									✓	✓				✓				✓		✓					✓				8	
Do Not put on <i>tika</i>								✓	✓	✓						✓	✓	✓			✓						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	13	
Do Not burn the dead, and Do Not perform post-dead rituals (<i>kiriya</i> , lasts up to one year)																							✓			✓							✓				3	
Do Not drink		✓		✓					✓					✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	18
Do Not smoke		✓							✓					✓	✓		✓	✓											✓	✓		✓				✓		10
Do Not gamble		✓		✓																																		2

This table emerged from Grounded Theory Analysis, the ticked markings only denote information explicitly and spontaneously given by informants or as answers to my request. Therefore empty areas do not provide any kind of information. Names are pseudonyms and correspond to the names used in the thesis.

Table 12: Markers and Stereotypes Mapped (Selected from Appendix A)

³⁷¹ I-16/11

As can be seen from Table 12 there are certain exclusive or ‘Do Not’ habits that have changed after conversion. The table shows whether informants directly or indirectly have mentioned the outlined ‘Do Not’ issues. The information on the table came from Grounded Theory Analysis (Figure 9). Only a selection of data is shown, the full table is shown in Appendix A. In the following sections (Sections 5.2.1 & 5.2.2) the changed and challenged Christian approach to the use of a red mark on the forehead (*tika*) and the use of alcohol (*raksi*) is examined.

5.2.1 Tika – A Non-Negotiable Issue

A significant section of the informants (40%) mentioned *tika* either in passing or simply wanted to talk about it.³⁷² To many Nepalis the deeper meaning of *tika* is not entirely clear, but it is a strong expression of Hindu worship or belief. The *tika* is placed between the eyebrows where, according to some Hindu teaching (there are various Hindu explanations), there is a *chakra*, the ‘third eye *chakra*’ which gives access to inner wisdom and truth as it is close to the human memory, and therefore it is called the ‘third eye’.³⁷³ There are other explanations or usages of *tika*. Mark Pickett says that Dashain is the festival that brings order particularly within the lineage by giving and receiving *tika*. Michael Prabhu writes that ‘*Tilak (tika)* is a mark of auspiciousness.’ He says that the *tilak* in India is used by Shiva devotees when applying sacred ashes on the forehead, whereas Vishnu devotees use sandal wood paste and Devi or Shakti devotees apply red turmeric powder.³⁷⁴ The applications and explanations are various, as also are

³⁷² There are many other words for *tika*: the most normal (usually from India) are: *tilak*, *tilaka*, *bindi*, *kumkum* and *pottu*. *Sindoor* is also used but in Nepal this is red powder used by women in their braided hair.

³⁷³ There are seven *chakras* in the human body, according to Hindu teaching. These denote energy centres and energy can flow through such *chakras*. It is important to control this energy flow, according to such teaching.

³⁷⁴ Prabhu, 2013; Michael Prabhu quotes Swami Shivananda on his home page.

the different usages between the sexes, how the applications are performed and the colours used. A widely quoted verse supposedly from the Hindu scriptures is:

A forehead without a *Tilak (Tika)*, a woman without a husband, a *Mantra* the meaning of which is not known while doing *Japa* (recitation), the head that does not bend before holy personages, a heart without mercy, a body devoid of health, a custom without purity,... – all these are worthy of condemnation. They exist for name's sake only.³⁷⁵

This places the use of *tika* in an important Hindu perspective regardless of how it is perceived. It is traditional to wear *tika* and there are strong elements of a socio-religious ritual. Therefore, changing allegiance to Jesus Christ from a traditional Nepalese worldview and no longer applying *tika* as a tradition embracing both the *sanskriti* and *sanskar* concepts creates many questions and much mental distress among traditional Nepalis, and consequently some Christians have experienced persecution. In the following two sections *tika* in general and *bhai-tika* in particular are discussed.

5.2.1.1 Tika – The Confusing Ritual

Four different male informants in different settings talked about religion and about *tika*. Bhim Bahadur Tamang, a 28 year old YWAM missionary who has worked among the Tharus for some time, said concerning Hindu devotion:³⁷⁶

I have many Hindu friends but actually they do not know Hinduism, they just keep following their ancestors, they just put on their *tikas* and everything, they are not very devoted. They are just doing things

³⁷⁵ Aggarwal, 2013

³⁷⁶ Bista, 2004, 141-142; Tharu tribe: most Tharus live in the Terai and may be the oldest groups to inhabit the Terai, many are indebted into slavery, according to Dor Bahadur Bista.

formally, but converting to Christ is a big thing. They are devoted to their culture religion, their traditions.³⁷⁷

He was not more specific but probably he refers to the behaviour of his friends, but it may be representative of a larger group of Hindus. Ghaman Tamang (28) a student, located in Kathmandu but originally from Pokhara, related his experience:

I have a lot of Hindu and Buddhist friends. I have not experienced much problems and troubles with friends, but sometimes we used to have debate on the topic of religion and God. When we have debate, it is sometimes difficult for me to explain why we do not put on *tika* and offer sacrifices to idols, but I do not have any problems with my friends. I just explain that I do not put on *tika* and sacrifice to idols.³⁷⁸

Deepak Bahadur Gurung, a 23 year old man from Tanahun, said after having been asked about people's respect for him:

There is, of course, many times where I have been criticised for not being a Hindu. They criticise me for following a foreign religion, and when I go to church then, when my parents die, I do not have to stay *kiriya* which means that for thirteen days we do not eat salt and wear white dress. They also say that I do not wear *tika* and go to the temple. Normally people do not say these things directly to me but they talk about it while talking about me, I know that because people tell me afterwards, when people talk in the families, the Hindu families.³⁷⁹

When Deepak, as a Gurung, neither takes on *tika* nor does *kiriya* which is part of the death ritual, the *arghoun*, which overshadows all other rituals in the Gurung society, then it comes as no surprise that he is criticised for following a foreign religion.³⁸⁰

Sukuman Lama, 49 years old, a highly positioned leader in the Asha Church in Gorkha said:

³⁷⁷ I-27/20

³⁷⁸ I-28/5;

³⁷⁹ I-33/12

³⁸⁰ Gurung, 2012, 1-10

When I was a Buddhist, I did not really know what Buddhism meant. But Buddhists are not supposed to be involved in *pujapath* but Tamang Buddhists follow Hindu customs. When I was a Buddhist I used to fold hands and bow down to honour elder people saying *lasso* (hello). But after I became Christian I do not follow that pattern, but I still honour the older people through my words and deeds...³⁸¹

Sukuman recalls his pre-Christian time as a less committed Buddhist, and cannot comprehend Tamang Buddhism in the light of Nepalese customs since Tamang Buddhism ideally should be separated from Hinduism. Ghaman seems to be interested, in a cognitive manner, to find reasons for God and Christian behaviour in relation to refraining from the use of *tika*. He seems frustrated that he is not able to explain his own behaviour.

The messages of Bhim, Ghaman and Deepak are that the general use of *tika* among Hindus and Buddhists is a devotional ritual which is difficult as a Christian both to stay clear of and to argue against. The reason for this may be that only a minority of Christians has sufficient knowledge about the ritual significance of the use of *tika* - both concerning the use among the traditional religious people and about the logic for Christians not to take *tika* - to take up a real debate. According to Bhim the Hindus, and to Ghaman, Deepak and Sukuman, the Buddhists also, appear to take *tika* or do *puja* as a national daily ritual.

The message of the informants above is interesting because Nepalese Hinduism or Nepalese religion taken as a whole largely seems to be an all-Nepalese traditional way of living based on respect for the ancestors and an adapted form of Buddhism to meet these terms. The use of *tika* is one of the stronger external expressions of belonging to

³⁸¹ I-14/7

the people of Nepal. The gurus and the twice-born priests as opposed to ordinary Nepalis are, as part of their practice, aware of the contents of Hindu scriptures and of Hindu literature. Traditional Nepalis follow traditions, rites and rituals as they have always done; however, the theory of Hinduism and Buddhism, except for key notions of *karma* and the cycle of being reborn, is not clear, according to these informants.³⁸²

The challenge is: if only a minority appears to have a credible explanation of the ritual significance of the use of *tika*, and even among them there are diverse meanings, could Christians not just participate in the tradition of using *tika*? Mark Pickett is one of the advocates in arguing that an idol is only what the individual associates with it, and that it is first and foremost a social concept, and on those grounds he legitimises the application of *tika* and *prasad* particularly during *Dashain*.³⁸³ Although many Christian markers and stereotypes will be challenged, discussed and overruled in the future as globalisation becomes more widespread in Nepal and as a new generation emerges, these questions of *tika* and *prasad* are probably not going to be discussed. Abstention from *tika* and *prasad* is a strong Christian marker and, regardless of the theological argumentation which could be used, it cannot easily change the general attitude. The five examples in Chapter 4 suggest that their experiences with the Christians and subsequent conversions develop exclusive approaches towards traditional practices. This is general for Christians and has become a mandatory marker. As we shall see in the following section, Christian exclusivity, although consisting of a series of strong markers which usually cannot be changed, is a strong Christian position against the traditional society but, even so, the boundaries they face are negotiated. This negotiation

³⁸² The informants did not talk about these concepts of *karma* and reincarnation, but they are generally known to ordinary people in Nepal

³⁸³ Pickett, 2004b; Pickett, 2003

of boundaries, which in essence tries to find a way to approach the usually unacceptable cultural area of *sanskar* from the safety zone of *sanskriti*, is understood as one of the significant ways Nepali Christians develop local theology.

5.2.1.2 Bhai-Tika – The Lost Brother

The religious pressures on Christians to put on *tika* are enormous. Ranjana Thapa, a twenty-one year old unmarried Magar from Tanahun, said ‘but I do miss *bhai-tika*, when people go from door to door and are meeting many people. However, we need to realise that this is not for us (Christians), it is a hard time, but we should not go.’³⁸⁴ So what is *bhai-tika*? *Bhai-tika* is a ritual which takes place during the last day of the *Tihar* festival that follows two weeks after *Dashain*.³⁸⁵ Jitendra Sahayogee writes:

The fifth or the last day of *Tihar* is *bhai-tika*. ... The reason why this festival is known as *bhai-tika* is that it falls on the second day after the new moon that is the *Tika* day. *Bhai-tika* is such a day to pray for the long life of the brothers (*bhai*) by [their] sisters, ... According to Hindu religious scriptures, Yamaraj, the God of death, went to visit his sister’s house after a long period of separation. His sister, Yami was very happy to see him and welcomed him by putting an auspicious mark on his forehead for his welfare. Yami and Yamaraj then shared a meal. He was so pleased with his sister’s reception, he proclaimed that every year, on the *Tika* day, if a sister puts a *tika* on her brother’s forehead, then no one can harm her brother. Till date, this tradition is followed. Sisters perform *pūja* for their brothers’ safety and well being. Brothers in return give gifts to their sisters as a token of love. Varied gifts especially meant for *bhai-tika* is available in the market. This festival of *Tihar* is incomplete without *bhai-tika*.³⁸⁶

Sahayogee’s definition and explanation of *bhai-tika* leaves no doubt that this worship and honour of the underworld god Yama Raj, the timing in relation to full moon, and the good fortune associated with putting on *tika* is a *sanskar* theme like any other *tika*

³⁸⁴ I-18/7

³⁸⁵ Perry, 1990, 180-182

³⁸⁶ Sahayogee, 2016

ritual. Even so, there is a difference between this particular ritual and most other traditional religious rituals.³⁸⁷ From the four accounts about *bhai-tika* (below) there is evidence that boundaries within that socio-religious domain have been negotiated differently between the Christians, they have approached this all-Nepali event differently; therefore the value of *bhai-tika* and what it accomplishes in the families should be assessed carefully. Avigya Karki describes the religious side of it but *Dashain* in general and *bhai-tika* during the festival of *Tihar* in particular has become a precious family event according to these informants. Mark Pickett asserts that ‘this festival (*Tihar*) is overwhelmingly a family event every bit as much as *Dashain* is an event for the whole extended lineage.’³⁸⁸ It is important to distinguish between ordinary *tika* and *bhai-tika* which is only given once a year. The ordinary daily type(s) of *tika* was discussed above (Section 5.2.1.1) but *bhai-tika* is a family-uniting socio-religious event resembling Christmas. Although no Christian is expected to participate in the actual *bhai-tika* ceremony because of its strong elements of *sanskar* the message of the informants is that it brings back memories of a good family time. Because the *bhai-tika* Hindu event marks out a significant identification with family and its traditions, unity and respect, it may be difficult for Nepali Christians to steer clear of it; the *sanskriti* family dynamics and the *sanskar* traditions and functions leave a vacuum in the family when Christians are not at home.³⁸⁹ The social substance of the *bhai-tika* ritual has caused certain Christians to try to negotiate this particular precarious boundary within their own sensitive family situation, some successfully, others unsuccessfully, as can be seen from the following examples.

³⁸⁷ Karki, 2006b

³⁸⁸ Pickett, 2004a

³⁸⁹ Lecomte-Tilouine, 2009, 13

I also celebrated *Dashain*. I need to be sincere about *Dashain*, it is a Hindu festival and is a festival for all the Nepali people, and for all the schools, campuses etc. it is a holiday time. And as a Christian I used to come home to celebrate *Dashain*, although I was not taking *tika* from my father's hand. But I came to my father's house and I ate and I had a party with my brothers and my father, I ate good meat with them because my brothers and sisters have come to the festival. But the last two years we have not been there with them. Because we decided that we are here for our church people. I am the pastor, and if I went home to family, then who would be here to visit the believers? The new believers are in trouble during those days. People are saying you are Christian; you are not wearing *tika* etc. Therefore if we are close to them they will feel secure because the pastor is with us. But during *Dashain* time you celebrated on a family basis, not the religious part of it. And I miss that in a sense. We also have *bhai-tika*; the sister will put on *tika*. A couple of times both my brothers were in Sweden, therefore my sisters would feel very sad. Therefore my family and I went to see them because they would prepare a lot of food. They should give us *tika* but we do not accept that, however, they prepared a *mala* and *taka-topi* (?) to greet our brothers, and we gave them some gifts and money. We did this a couple of times.³⁹⁰ (Pastor Gurung)

At the *bhai-tika* my brother invited me to give him *tika* and prepare food. However, I went to my brother's home and said to him: brother, God protected me from being a widow through healing my husband. Therefore I will not give you *tika*, but I will prepare good food for you. But my brother became angry.³⁹¹ (Pabitra Kumal)

Srijana Khadka (approximately 25 years old) is married to a Tamang and was brought up in a Chhetri family with two sisters and one brother. Her father has two wives, and her mother is his second wife. First, a little about her background, she says:

My brother gave trouble in the family because he is of the first wife. Therefore I left home after my SLC.³⁹² Then I went to India to my uncle's home study. At that time he was a Christian. He asked me one question: 'do you want to become a Christian or a Hindu?' I answered, 'let me think and later I will give you an answer.' But at that time I was full of 'smallpox/chickenpox sort of thing'. At that time I was a true worshipper of Shiva. Although my uncle was a Christian I still worshipped Shiva in his house. One day I decided to believe in Jesus

³⁹⁰ I-35/14

³⁹¹ I-10/9

³⁹² SLC: School Leaving Certificate corresponding to 10th grade or GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education)

rather than to go back to Nepal. ... I went to Tista (Darjeeling) for one month training. I received Jesus Christ as my personal saviour. After finishing my training I took baptism.

While I was in Nepal at that time I was a Maoist, I had a lot of Maoist literature. One day a policeman came and searched my village and the policeman killed some of my friends but by the grace of God I am saved. I thank God because he saved me. After finishing my one month training I went to Jaigaon (Bhutan) to study two years bible course. After finishing my two years study my teacher sent me to my own village in Nepal for church planting. Before I came to my village there was already a church. I then helped the church there with church planting.³⁹³ (Srijana Khadka)

Srijana says about her experience of *bhai-tika*:

Is there anything you miss from the time when you were a Hindu? I miss one beautiful Hindu festival; it is called bhai-tika. Now I have to deny that festival. I had a brother when I became Christian. Whenever this festival comes my brother usually cries because I became Christian. I felt really sorry for him, now I am missing my relationship with my brother. After I became Christian I have not met my brother as he is abroad. My brother says 'I miss this tika' because it is a relationship between brother and sister. My sisters have come during Christmas.³⁹⁴ ... Could anything in the church be done to replace that festival? Christmas is in a sense replacing Hindu festivals, especially bhai-tika because they are giving gifts. But I have not had a chance to celebrate Christmas with my brother because he is far away.³⁹⁵

I have added an example from an external source in Kathmandu where Cindy Perry writes about a deacon named Sahadev:³⁹⁶

Two years ago, Sahadev, the deacon of a respected church in the Kathmandu Valley, came to a decision after personal reflection on this problem. He became a Christian several years before, and always separated himself from his Hindu family during festival times so as not to compromise his new faith. For instance, he never returned to his

³⁹³ I-08/4; 'Church planting' is a western expression for establishing new churches, either main churches or daughter churches, even house fellowships

³⁹⁴ I-08/10

³⁹⁵ I-08/11

³⁹⁶ This example is taken from Cindy Perry; also used as a case example by Mark Pickett

parents' home during *bhai-tika* to honour his sisters. To them it felt as if they did not have a brother anymore, and it caused them much grief. He began to reflect on how he could communicate the love of God to his family or the integrity of the gospel teaching on family if he continued to cut himself off as brother and son? How could he honour and fulfill his responsibilities to them in terms they understood, yet without compromise?

Sahadev made a bold personal decision and went to his parents' home on *bhai-tika* - to demonstrate his honour for his family, and especially his sisters, and to affirm his respect, care and affection for them. After explaining to the family the limits of his participation in the light of his Christian faith, he was warmly received and welcomed. He took gifts for them according to tradition, and offered to pray for them in the name of Jesus rather than to participate in the *puja* (worship) ceremonies. He also received their gifts, but not the *tika* or *prasad* (from what is offered to the idols), then joined in the family feast. He recounts the joy of his family at his joining them in this small way, and the new integrity it has given to his testimony in the whole village - though unashamedly a Christian, he is still 'one of our people.'³⁹⁷

These examples demonstrate a wish to keep the brother-sister relationship and to find solutions to substitute the *bhai-tika* ritual with new *non-sanskar* approaches within the *sanskriti* realm that satisfy everybody. The borrowed example of the deacon Sahadev expresses the unifying factor that the love is still strong and intact between the brother and sister. It was a noble strategy to involve the family in his thoughts by opening his heart to them demonstrating a personal responsibility as a member of the family, and he was accepted.³⁹⁸ Being a Christian participating in a traditional festival is to walk a tightrope between meeting the ritual demands of the family and avoiding compromising Christian belief. However, Pastor Gurung also experienced genuine love throughout *Dashain* and *Tihar*. He accepted the *mala* (garland made of flowers) and a *topi* (Nepali hat) but abstained from any form of *tika*. Consequently, he was together with his family

³⁹⁷ Perry, 1990, 181; Pickett, 2004a; Pickett, 2004b;

³⁹⁸ Noble strategy is Perry's assessment as she said that Sahdev made a bold decision to show honour, care, respect and affection

and gave them money and gifts as was his duty without compromising his Christian belief.

Pabitra did not succeed. The reason is not clear. Srijana, the former Maoist, who sincerely misses the *Tihar* festival, has come to the conclusion like Ranjana Thapa (p. 186) that *Tihar* including *bhai-tika* has to be denied. Srijana is deeply troubled that she has not seen her brother for a long time. Her brother's complaint that their relationship has been damaged as they cannot perform brother-sister ritual anymore distresses her. Srijana's information about Christmas as a Christian festival with many parallels to *bhai-tika*, in a sense replacing *bhai-tika* as she says, as they give each other gifts and eat good food and enjoy the family life together, appears to be a welcome meeting point for her. From these interviews, it has become clear yet again that family life is important to the Nepalis, the hostility towards Christianity in the family is a concern.

These examples portray the way Christians are individually able and allowed by the Christian community to walk their own ways inside enemy territory, so to speak, as these *sanskar* festivals are the pinnacle of Nepalese Hinduism and tradition; however they are also a bringing-together and a gathering of families. Many churches make retreats as they cannot find ways to relate to these and other festivals; one interesting thing to note is the self-determination characterising the individual Christians because that character of Nepalese Christianity seems to produce an active desire to reach out to their society.

5.2.2 Drinking – Another Non-Negotiable Issue, Or ... ?

Rupa Dhital et al. write in their report about alcohol use in Nepal that ‘Historically, in some communities of Nepal alcohol is an essential substance for their cultural, ritual and religious ceremonies.’³⁹⁹ Dhital adds that alcohol is significant in most ethnic groups such as the Tamang religion and culture as they cannot perform any ritual or ceremonies without the use of alcohol, and it is important during social events and even an honour to be served alcohol.⁴⁰⁰ This is noteworthy because this indicates that Tamang people are closely connected with the consumption of alcohol. The use of alcohol is widespread in Nepal and many, except most twice-born or cord-wearers (see, though, Section 5.2, p. 177), drink various kinds of brews (*raksi*, *chhang* etc.).⁴⁰¹ Drinking can be a huge social problem contributing to the poverty in the country. According to Dhital, drinking in some communities is important, is more than a habit, and is part of the culture, and traditional and cultural occasions as well as social gatherings play a major role.⁴⁰² This means that an underlying cause of drinking may be a national cultural pressure. Drinking in some communities starts at an early age.⁴⁰³

In Nepal, Christians abstain from alcohol and tobacco. One pastor said: ‘In Nepal, gambling, smoking and drinking, once they become Christians, it all stops.’ Christians who use alcohol or tobacco are either ostracised from the church or disparaged by the

³⁹⁹ Kunwor, 2009, 13

⁴⁰⁰ Dhital, 2001, 37

⁴⁰¹ Kunwor, 2009, 7; ‘Alcohol is tabooed in the Brahmins and the Kshatriya’s society.’ Höfer, 2004, 9; Cord-wearers are caste groups who wear the sacred cord (a string over the shoulder). These castes are the high-caste Brahmin, Rajput, Jaisi Brahmin, Chhettri, Newar Brahmin, Indian Brahmin, ascetic sects, ‘lower’ Jaisi and various Newar castes. Dhital, 2001, 36; ‘*Jand* or *Chhang* (home brews fermented from rice, millet, maize and wheat), home-made *Raksi* (distilled liquor made of grains or unrefined sugar for household use), local *Raksi* available at market (locally made for commercial purpose), beer, distillery products (brandy, rum, vodka, whisky) and foreign made liquors (wine, brandy, gin, whiskey etc.)’

⁴⁰² Dhital, 2001, 40

⁴⁰³ Dhital, 2001, 32; Age: 6-17: 19% were users (had tried within the last twelve months)

Christian community. For comparison (Table 12, p. 180), 63% of informants mentioned one or more of the issues that Christians abstain from: *tika*, *puja*, *prasad*, *kiriya* or going to the temple (*sanskar*) and 57% of informants mentioned one or more of the following: that Christians do not use alcohol or tobacco, gamble or take drugs (*sanskriti*).⁴⁰⁴ The former was discussed using *tika* as the representative of *sanskar*. The latter will be discussed here using alcohol as a representative of intoxicating stimulants because 51% of informants asserted that Christians do not drink which is perceived as a major problem, not least because of the cultural pressure.

It seems logical that Christians should not use alcohol. Many church societies worldwide have a take on this policy. The Nepalese alcohol policy may be a good decision but may be no more than a church rule which has developed into a strong Nepalese Christian marker.⁴⁰⁵ Biblical markers, meanwhile, are far more flexible than rigid church rules, and nowhere in the bible is wine banned as a general principle. From Marie Lecomte-Tilouine it can be deduced that markers or stereotyping is a corollary of social clustering, and Christian opinions are determined by the group stereotype.⁴⁰⁶ Certain markers, though, were determined by the early church leaders in the 1950s, such as abstention from *tika*, *puja* and *prasad*, as well as from alcohol and tobacco. This has not been taken up formally as a Christian theological guideline partly because it appeared self-evident to everybody and partly because there was no real recognised decision-making church body in Nepal except from NCF Nepal; however, NCF Nepal (NCF) had just begun in 1960 and although theological courses are part of their

⁴⁰⁴ 63% mentioned issues related to *sanskar* and 57% mentioned issues related to *sanskriti*. This does not mean that the rest of the informants (37% and 43% respectively) thought differently but merely that they talked about other issues during the interviews. Regarding the mentioned issues there was consensus among those who made known their opinions

⁴⁰⁵ Biblical markers of the church (disciples and believers) are broad and versatile, for example (from the New Testament): John 13:34-35; Mark 16:17; 1 Corinthians 4:21-22; Galatians 5:22-23

⁴⁰⁶ Lecomte-Tilouine, 2009, 8

objectives (Obj.no. 2, p. 96) they have no formal teaching on alcohol. The main objective of the organisation is more accurately seen as maintaining unity between the churches. However, it is my assessment that this unity encompassed a mutual although tacit understanding and compliance of a zero-tolerance policy between churches and church leaders towards the use of alcohol. It was already a marker from the beginning (the 1950s) among the Christians, perhaps a group stereotype carry-over from India from where the first Christians came. Where in India it came from is an open question, presumably not from the Presbyterians who were dominated by the Scots and English. The Pentecostals and Charismatics in general have a record of abstention from alcohol; they may have influenced some of the recruited Nepali leaders (Section 3.3.3, p. 81) during and towards the middle of the twentieth century.⁴⁰⁷ The foreign missionaries in Nepal (INF, UMN, AG, OM, YWAM etc.) by and large had no intake of any kind of alcohol which may have sustained and cemented the decision from the beginning (1950s) for the Nepalis.⁴⁰⁸

5.2.2.1 Christian (non)-Drinking Culture – Advantages

Drinking is a constant part of many ethnic cultures like *Janajati*; it challenges vital areas like money, time and harmony in families. When Christians abstain from using alcohol it makes considerable impact in these areas and in their villages. People admire the Christians for having stopped using alcohol, according to some informants, and this has become one of the strongest Christian markers along with the abstention of the use of *tika*, although the latter is not as popular among the traditional religious people as the

⁴⁰⁷ The recruited Christians: Christians specially trained for evangelising in-land Nepal

⁴⁰⁸ A moderate drinking in private by a minority of missionaries is quite common, though

former. In this and in the next section, informants give short, concise statements portraying the general view of the Christians regarding alcohol:

As Buddhists we have to drink *raksi* because of being Tamang people, however after having become Christian we have left that part of the culture, no drinking and no smoking (Sukuman Lama).⁴⁰⁹

This is a sort of culture as well. Furthermore we do not have to spend a lot of money on all the sacrifices and drinking and the like (Bishal Bahadur Tamang).⁴¹⁰

They see that the Tamang have good educations, good houses, good and clean clothes, they have money because they do not waste money in drinking alcohol and waste money in sacrificing cocks and goats. God has blessed us, and another thing is that we do not waste money gambling (Devi Bahadur Tamang).⁴¹¹

A lot of positive things, especially the Buddhists say that the Christians are leaving their old nature, they used to drink, and they used to offer sacrifices (Bhuban Tamang).⁴¹²

Yes. In Tamang culture, to drink *raksi*, this is Tamang; this has nothing to do with gods and goddesses. But after having become Christians, if you do not distinguish, it is bad, as Christians we have a high level standard because this God says you should not be drunk. This is discernment. You will know God more and more ... The community has seen something different in our lives, the Christians have opened schools, one of my house-owners said that Christians do not drink, and I like to put my children in Christian schools because they have different values, so yes ... (Binod Tamang).⁴¹³

Although drinking *raksi* is Tamang Buddhist culture they leave that part of the Tamang culture, according to Sukuman, Bhuban and Binod. Bhuban Tamang, fifty years old, is a pastor in a village in Nuwakot. When he was fifteen he was interested in Christianity but found it difficult to believe because of his family. He was married when he was

⁴⁰⁹ I-14/8

⁴¹⁰ I-02/44

⁴¹¹ I-04/21

⁴¹² I-25/12

⁴¹³ I-30/11,15

seventeen years old, and became Christian when he was thirty-two years old. He says ‘Though I was a Buddhist I never believed in all this *tantra-mantra*, I did not like it either.’ Rita Tamang, twenty-three years old, is one of the teachers in Nuwakot. She has a plus-two school training (corresponding to sixth form) and bible school training. She was born and brought up in a Buddhist family but was introduced to Christians when she was eighteen years old when her conversion began. Rita agrees with what has been said:

Seeing the Christian life, those who are non-Christian are saying that the Christians are good because they are leaving their old nature because they used to drink alcohol but after they became Christian they have stopped drinking. Whenever the Christian will pray sick people will be healed. That is very good.⁴¹⁴

Rita points out the promptness and willingness from the Christians concerning prayer which has a positive impact on the local community. Devi, Pastor Tamang and Binod, who are all leaders, also declare the general good impression the Christians convey to the local people:

- Do not spend money on alcohol, sacrificing or gambling
- Do spend money on good education
- Make good houses
- Wear good and clean clothes
- Have good wedding traditions (shorter and therefore less costly)⁴¹⁵
- Are always willing to pray for people

The money saved by not using alcohol, gambling and sacrificing is released for investing in better houses and education. The zero-tolerance alcohol policy has not

⁴¹⁴ I-20/14

⁴¹⁵ I-30/15; ‘Also during a marriage ceremony, people like that because people say that Christians are so good in this area, we do 2-3 days ceremony, we use money, we have to borrow from others. They have seen that we do it differently as it only lasts a short time. They like that a lot’

convincingly been officially defended within the Christian community nor argued even on a small scale between Christians theologically or biblically. Binod, though, states that ‘God says you should not be drunk’ which is biblical.⁴¹⁶ There are signifiers in the bible concerning drinking, it seems. Every Sabbath (Friday sunset until Saturday sunset) the Jews and the Jewish society, from where the Messiah or Christ came, drink wine. Within this context, the Holy Communion was inaugurated during Easter with bread and wine by Jesus Christ himself. From this some Christians would argue that there are biblical precedents for a modest intake of alcohol. However, this is a complicated concept to communicate to the Nepalese community: they are allowed to drink, but not drink too much. Who is to evaluate or set limits on a reasonable intake of alcohol in a Nepalese context? Consequently, like many individual Christian churches worldwide Christians have agreed to a zero-tolerance decision which may, after all, in the case of Nepal, have been a good decision - whoever made it initially - according to informants. Over the years it has developed into a marker profiling one of the characteristics of the Christians, and is not an issue which has either been discussed or is an upcoming debate as an official suggestion for Nepali Christians. The foreign missionaries largely do not use alcohol in Nepal, AGAPE members who are charismatics do not use alcohol, AG are Pentecostals, they do not use alcohol, and NCF Nepal, which represents approximately 1000 churches, has no proactive view on the issue but their member churches teach, as any other Nepali evangelical church, abstention from alcohol during baptismal programmes.⁴¹⁷ In addition to this, non-drinking is, as mentioned, a strong Christian marker. Therefore it is my assessment that alcohol among Christians to adapt

⁴¹⁶ Bible: Ephesians .5:18 ‘And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit’, Luke 21:34 ‘But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.’ These are typical biblical examples of abstaining from drinking, however the emphasis here is on getting drunk

⁴¹⁷ NCF, 2009;

to that part of the culture will not be immediately forthcoming. Many new denominations have come to Nepal, a minority of these may in theory have a tendency to use alcohol but in practice it is unlikely that they would divert from the rest of Nepalese practice on this strong Christian marker. Some come from S Korea or other Asian countries and USA and it is doubtful that they would encourage intake of alcoholic beverages.

5.2.2.2 Christian (non)-Drinking Culture - Challenges

The inherent zero-tolerance policy among the early Christians which brought about much respect also brought great challenges, even to some of the stronger Christians. This section looks at some of these challenges. Arjun Bahadur, a twenty-seven year old Tamang and married to Gyanu Pokharel, twenty-four years old, says about himself:

My father is an elder in GAC and my mother also helps in ministry in the church, they are also doing agricultural work. Now I am married and we are expecting a baby ... I am doing ministry among the children in the church in Kathmandu. Sometimes I work in different churches teaching discipleship teaching programmes. I am also a trekking guide. I take people to show how God has created things beautifully...He is the perfect Creator.⁴¹⁸

Arjun experienced some challenges after his baptism:

Life was more difficult for me after I was baptised because of my friends, they were drinking and smoking. It hit me, the fact that I was together with people who were drinking and smoking, and I had to

⁴¹⁸ I-31/5

make a decision to not do that even though in a sense it was a difficult thought.⁴¹⁹

How do you relate with other people? We can make friendships with the Hindus and the Buddhists. But sometimes they drink and smoke, and then it becomes difficult for me to mingle with them and uphold friendships because I am not drinking and smoking. Therefore we need to find out what kind of people we are dealing with. Especially when I have been trekking, there have been many situations I have wanted to be with people, but then if they ask me to drink *raksi* I need to abstain from fellowship. If I do not make fellowship with them then I will be alone. I need to be careful what I am doing. For example I have to identify other Christians, and identify who I am. It can be a difficult situation at times.⁴²⁰

He is trekking as a guide. It is interesting because it provides him with a good and broad experience of many different cultures. This opening to other ethnic groups is beneficial as he builds up skills at mingling with different people as a Christian although he is socially disqualified due to the alcohol policy. He admits his occasional frustrations in the same way that Ghaman Tamang seems annoyed at times:

Talking about fun, most of my friends they drink and smoke which I do not do. I may seem a bit odd to them, and first they accused me for not taking the stuff, why not? But now they understand it, and they do not force me to. *Would you like the drinking and smoking to be part of the Christian culture?* Not really, this is better, without alcohol.⁴²¹

Ranjana Thapa, the Magar who missed *bhai-tika*, does not miss alcohol, tobacco, watching Bollywood films in the cinema (Panchayat Christians did not watch Bollywood films but the Democratic Christians do), although she goes to parties when the opportunity presents itself:

⁴¹⁹ I-31/9

⁴²⁰ I-31/13; Arjun is trekking regularly in the mountain as a tourist guide to supply his income

⁴²¹ I-28/5-6

When I go out with my classmates I do not drink and I do not smoke. I go to parties even though I know that people are drinking. I have not had a party myself. However, I do not go to the cinema, I do not watch Bollywood. In the beginning when I had become a Christian, and they asked me to come I did not come. Then they said it was because I had become a Christian. When they asked me to come to the *puja* time and the worship time, then I refused to come to that, then they said it was because I had become a Christian. However, I would come for the rest of the picnic; I just did not want to come for *puja*.⁴²²

As a young woman, Ranjana may not have problems abstaining from alcohol and tobacco. Presumably the same socio-cultural pressure is not the same for her as it is for young men. But Arjun, Ghaman and Ranjana, possibly representative of many Christians, do have to defend their views of abstention. As there is no clear theological teaching in a socio-economical context relating to matters of alcohol, tobacco, gambling, watching films, dancing etc. as well as to *tika*, *puja*, *prasad* etc. Christians in the churches are often taught simple legalistic guidelines, often during baptismal preparation, with limited theological instruction related to that (p. 204). Presumably there is no such teaching because of a lack of an established decision-making church entity (p. 193); such an entity could either be a church organisation or a recognised Nepali Christian medium such as a leading church. Although there are church organisations, leading churches and other media none has a decision-making function. In Asha Church the teaching level is reasonably high (Section 7.2.2, p. 279) because of the locations of the churches, except for NAC; therefore the general understanding of Christian belief appears to be strong but it is my impression that teaching is on biblical issues more than on daily challenges. Therefore, at times, Christians are scrutinised in debates with traditional Nepalis and end up like Ghaman (p. 199) who says that ‘first they accused me for not taking the stuff, why not? But now they understand it.’ But

⁴²² I-18/6

Ghaman's evaluation is not convincing, and the question arising from this is: Does anyone really understand why the Christians do not drink, after all? The abstention decisions are quite tough on the Christians as they interfere with socio-cultural matters and religious ceremonies. Pastor Bhuban adds another problem by saying:

The Buddhists say that the Christians are leaving their old nature, they used to drink, and they used to offer sacrifices. It is true because there is no need for sacrifices; the Buddhists are saying the Christian people are good. Some people are saying that some Christian is; those who are not really Christians, those who are carnal Christians. The non-believers are saying, seeing their lives still they are not changing the way they are talking, their lifestyle. Some Christians are still drinking (having a negative influence on society).

Pastor Bhuban says that the testimony the Christians generally have among the Buddhists is that they are leaving their old nature, by which he points to their changed drinking habits and other issues. Meanwhile, Bhuban seems to be saying that there are some Christians who for one reason or another are still drinking. The pastor passes on the message that it has a negative influence on the reputation of Christians in the society because the non-drinking culture and testimony Christians generally build up - with some difficulty - is weakened by having some who drink. Pastor Bhuban quotes some traditional people who say about the Christians 'they are not changing the way they are talking, their lifestyle.' Obviously this gives the pastor some challenges. In other words the local people accuse the Christians of being hypocrites and it is a trouble for the pastor; he calls the drinking Christians carnal Christians. There is a general attitude among Christians in Nepal that drinking Christians are not Christians; however, although this may have been true once, during the Panchayat days, times are changing. Surya Tamang reports:

Among the [Panchayat] generation Christians there is a fear for God. But now, in the [Democratic] generation Christianity there is no fear of God. When we became Christian we left everything like *churot* (cigarette) and *raksi* but after the freedom believers smoke and drink freely.⁴²³

Obviously, this is one of the challenges of having a Christian behaviour with strong markers. Among Christians, using alcohol is not a socio-cultural element which is missing. However, in the Asha Church where the informants are *Janajati* and only three are from the usually non-drinking high-caste background such as Brahmin, Chhetri and Thakuri, clearly the majority have been brought up in a drinking culture like Tamang, Gurung, Magar or low-caste either as Christians or as pre-converted traditional people. As Christians they did not drink but with close family members and in wider family get-togethers they have been exposed to people drinking. Therefore, the challenge lies in navigating the tension that arises between what is expected from the caste background which is drinking and the choice the Christians have made which is to abstain from drinking.

5.2.2.3 Negotiable Issues

Integrating Christian markers into the Nepalese socio-religious context requires, for the Nepali, a careful approach. There are two examples in this section to demonstrate some of the challenges of drinking markers. The Christian's intention to follow a zero-tolerance alcohol policy may be strong but may be difficult to fully translate into reality.

At least Deepak has noticed that some Christians still have old habits:

The Christians are somewhat influenced by the Hindus, they are still drinking. Although they are not drinking a lot, they drink a little. They

⁴²³ I-09/13

still drink a little in the morning and in the evening because they have been used to do that a long time.⁴²⁴

Are they influenced by the Hindus or is it a habit difficult to get rid of? They drink much less than before, only ‘a little in the morning and in the evening.’ Deepak does not say whether he talks about baptised believers or not. Among the Panchayat generation Christian baptised believers do not drink, but as suggested above (Section 5.2.2.2) some among the Democratic generation Christians seem to be more relaxed about this issue. In Kabita Maya Tamang’s family in Nuwakot the family income was supplied by the production of alcohol which they had done for a long time. She says:

Before, when I was not in Christ, I used to make alcohol to support my family but when I accepted Christ one year after my son’s healing, then I left everything. However, God started to bless me, not only financially ...⁴²⁵

Kabita Maya is forty years old and has three children. Ram Bahadur, her seventeen year old son, reports on his family’s life:

I was born and brought up in a Christian family, before my birth my family was Christian, but they were not strong in faith. Because of financial problems, they were involved in traditional fabricating of alcohol. But when I had grown up, by the grace of God, God blessed us, and they left that particular job. I am very happy because God is doing lot of works in my life ... But when my family they left the production of alcohol, automatically God blessed our agricultural area, cattle. Even my father, once he went to Malaysia. So they left the production of alcohol and then God blessed our family.⁴²⁶

Combining the two accounts of Kabita Maya and Ram Bahadur where she says she was not a believer and Ram says they were not strong in faith, I arrive at an understanding that they were Christians but not strong in faith. However, retrospectively, Kabita Maya

⁴²⁴ I-33/16

⁴²⁵ I-21/6

⁴²⁶ I-22/6, 9

may with today's faith assess herself to not have been a real Christian then; therefore she said 'when I was not in Christ.' This gives a conversion over time before it reaches the level where there is willingness in the family to give up the fabrication of alcohol. And then the message is that God blessed the family and individuals in the family. The father earned extra money by going to Malaysia, Ram did well in school (not mentioned here), Kabita Maya is learning to read and write, and there are blessings with their farming.

There seems to be a time of transition between the traditional way of living and fully adopting Christian markers, which is understandable. Ganesh says about his brother that 'My own brother used to study his bible a lot, but now he is taking some alcohol.'⁴²⁷ The context reveals that Ganesh cannot follow the logic of his brother in beginning to drink and still going to church. Surya Tamang, forty-eight years old, one of the original co-workers among the founders of the church, reports (p. 201) that, 'When we became Christian we left everything like *churot* (cigarette) and *raksi* but after the freedom believers smoke and drink freely.'⁴²⁸

The drinking marker is strong and most evangelical churches in Nepal inclusive of Asha Church include abstention from alcohol and tobacco as part of their baptismal teaching programme, according to Ian Gibson and Pastor Bishal Tamang.⁴²⁹ Ian Gibson writes concerning church guidance in Bhaktapur:

That in order to become fully Christian (that is, to take baptism and become a church member) one must entirely give up worshipping the Hindu gods, and abandon all Hindu rites and rituals, as well as giving

⁴²⁷ I-19/16

⁴²⁸ I-09/13

⁴²⁹ During summer 2015 I had an opportunity to ask follow-up questions regarding Nepali drinking policy with Pastor Bishal Tamang

up alcohol and tobacco, and participating fully in church life. It is only after this transition has been made that good health will be secure.⁴³⁰

Such statements put persons who consider Christianity in a difficult position because the message is clear and, as Gibson says, they risk social ostracism and they may find it difficult to give up alcohol and tobacco. The different examples above indicate in the same way that the issue of alcohol is not without challenges. But the focus is directed towards the church because, although the teaching in its basic form is clear, people may still want to consume alcohol. Whether there are natural times of transition through a conversion process or there are people who make personal decisions about drinking, or whether there are simply carnal Christians like those whom the pastor in Nuwakot is concerned about, the marker of alcohol is contested and seems to be increasingly difficult to enforce by the church; although it is a tiny minority, it is a new situation. The message from informants and my general impression from Nepali Christians is that the Panchayat generation Christians were persistent and unwavering in their decisions to adopt the Christian markers (p. 110); for them to stop alcohol and tobacco was not an issue to be discussed and the consequent habituation to a life with these strong markers became their style of living. The freedom during Democracy brought about great temptation among the Democratic generation Christians. The younger generation was given a lot of freedom with many opportunities for new challenges and was also left with reduced supervision as they moved away from home to one of the bigger towns or cities (Section 3.5.3.3, p. 115). Surya above explains that ‘believers smoke and drink freely.’ It could encourage an understanding of a rather liberal approach to Christianity but it is my impression that it is only a tiny though growing minority who drink and that it is a challenge for the Nepali church to consider their approach to handling this.

⁴³⁰ Gibson, 2014, 160

The Panchayat generation Christians have not embraced this free attitude towards alcohol and tobacco. Their pioneering attitude and the fact that there were considerably fewer Christians in the Panchayat days made it special to be Christian. In the days of Democracy it became less noteworthy when the number of Christians had risen from around 25,000 to, at least, 700,000 in 2009, according to NCF Nepal in 2009.⁴³¹ Today, Christians in Nepal are obviously still a minority but not particularly unusual and the pioneering Panchayat generation attitude is opposed, and it is probable (and this is my assessment, too) that making tough decisions, like totally quitting alcohol and tobacco, is now more difficult for Christians. In relation to the local authorities no one has to fight for his own belief as before which often produces a lax attitude, but it would be entirely wrong to belittle the challenges of being a Christian in Nepal; occasionally there are persecutions from family, according to Srijana Khadka.⁴³²

5.3 Negotiable Issues Negotiated

Namaste is a non-contact way of greeting each other meaning ‘I bow to you’. However, in its broader context, in the Hindu worldview, it has deeper significance as the one being bowed to will ultimately be Brahma whom the Hindus believe we are all part of. This is the reason why the Christians have problems with this form of greeting. *Jaimashi* or *Jaya Mashiha* is the usual non-contact Nepalese form that many Christians exchanged from the traditional Nepalese greeting *Namaste*, at least when they greet someone within the Christian community. *Jaimashi* means ‘victory in Christ’ (Messiah). Many Christians feel awkward to use it as their special form of greeting, particularly in areas where people are not used to it. Today, they may use both greetings

⁴³¹ NCF, 2009; NCF Nepal assesses there are 700,000-1 million Christians in 2009

⁴³² I-08/21; This informant said: ‘Although we have freedom through Democracy, there are still some believers there who are under persecution from the local community, especially the family.’

as appropriate. In addition, urban Christians may at times use the classical western ‘shaking-hands’ form. Unknowingly, there is a change towards a western ‘shaking-hands’ while saying ‘Hello’ or *Jaimashi* among Christians, sometimes both. Perhaps this is reflecting the general globalism among Nepalis that shaking-hands has come, at least in the cities, and then ‘Hello’ or *Namaste* instead of the traditional Nepalese non-contact way of greeting. There are signs of a small shift.

Similarly, Christians once rejected the wearing of red sarees at weddings as this was the custom of Hindu brides, and substituted white ones instead, today Christians increasingly accept, even welcome, brides wearing any colour including red.⁴³³ In Nepal, accepting the use of colours other than white for Christian weddings appears to be a good idea partly because the Christian faith allows for that freedom and partly because in Hindu culture ‘red stands for fertility and life and white for barrenness and death’, and often there will be Hindu family members or friends participating in such a wedding.⁴³⁴ In this way, having identified shifts in Christians’ attitudes towards such minor *sanskriti*-related matters, Christian stereotypical contextual issues are relevant to every Nepali Christian and even exclusive Christians are moving, slowly, towards re-negotiating boundaries, thus dealing with issues relevant for the local community.

Nevertheless, the arguments against changing already identified, and established approaches to socio-religious concepts mapped out by the Panchayat-generation Christians, follow known theological trajectories of fear of syncretism and lack of spiritual discernment.⁴³⁵ Some Hindus do not like it either but expect the Christians to behave according to certain patterns. Srijana says, ‘Therefore the Hindus criticise the

⁴³³ Perry, 1990, 178

⁴³⁴ Hiebert, 1984, 288

⁴³⁵ Shaw, 2003, 144; Sugden, 1997, 279, 91

Christians for following the Hindu customs and not really leaving the Hindu traditions,’ and the Christian testimony appears confusing to the Hindus when they deviate from a traditional Christian lifestyle.⁴³⁶ When people decide to become Christians and are baptised there is a demand for people willing to go through times of suffering and persecution because church life in the Asha Church as well as in other churches is strongly founded on the bible.

Decisions that are not strictly biblical are liable to change over the years, to follow the custom of the day in the community. There are no strict biblical greeting guidelines but when Jesus sent out the twelve disciples he said: ‘As you enter the house, greet it.’⁴³⁷ This was a greeting directed to the Jews and not to the Gentiles. In Biblical times, David said to the young men: ‘Go up to Carmel, and go to Nabal and greet him in my name. And thus you shall greet him: “Peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have.”’⁴³⁸ The former with Jesus’ disciples was more general and the latter at Nabal’s place more specific. The Jewish greeting *shalom* means peace, but its meaning is comprehensive. The biblical guideline among one’s own people seems to be a welcoming and polite attitude in addition to being clear in whose name, Jesus, the Christian is coming. The Nepalese Christian non-contact greeting is appropriate from a biblical perspective; however, anyone can adapt the use of both expressions, *Namaste* and *Jaimashi*, between daily working situations and church or evangelistic situations according to personality. A traditional religious Nepali may not like to be greeted by ‘victory in Christ’, however, it is known that some Hindus and Buddhists have begun to

⁴³⁶ Lecomte-Tilouine, 2009, 23-24; I-08/18

⁴³⁷ Bible: Matthew 10:12-14 ‘As you enter the house, greet it. And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town.’

⁴³⁸ Bible: 1 Samuel 25:5-6 ‘So David sent ten young men. And David said to the young men, “Go up to Carmel, and go to Nabal and greet him in my name. And thus you shall greet him: ‘Peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have.’”

greet their Christian neighbours by saying *Jaymasih* as a kind of respect towards their beliefs.

As decisions are liable to change, it is possible that the attitude to alcohol and perhaps even the local festivals and the approach to *tika* may be issues to be negotiated over time. The latter, *tika*, is more doubtful as long as Hinduism is as strong as it is but as a principle, it depends on the group-defined stereotype among the Christians.

5.4 Conclusion

The Nepalese culture was divided into two parts with the help of a polarisation tool. This tool extracted non-acceptable and acceptable cultural issues and notions from a Christian perspective. This polarisation tool, where the poles are called *sanskar* and *sanskriti*, express the socio-religious approaches Christians have adopted when they negotiate their boundaries in society or face-to-face with people. The poles are identified and diagrammed as separated but, in that cultural notions are complex, there are tensions between the poles with a certain level of integration depending on the issue, giving the tool a dialectical approach to the Nepalese culture. The analysis of two Christian markers lead to interesting negotiations. Both of these markers are situated in their respective poles, one as a *sanskar* notion and the other as a *sanskriti* notion: abstention from putting *tika* on the forehead (*sanskar*) as a representative for rites and rituals, and from drinking alcohol (*sanskriti*) as a representative for all kinds of intoxicants. These two highly profiled markers are analysed with the view of comprehending Christian attitudes and tactics for dealing with them in society. Christian Nepalis (informants) have experienced the necessity to deny parts of their culture, but there are cultural issues which are deep-rooted and good, and changing such practices would be meaningless.

There were informants who demonstrated an aching need to see their families, particularly during *bhai-tika*, this brother-sister bond, which is dear to many. Consequently some informants made serious attempts to re-negotiate their boundaries during the festival of *Tihar*, some successfully, others unsuccessfully, while others did not even consider participating for the sake of Christian principle. Informants who participated in festivals and ceremonial activities did not launch into real *sanskar* but remained on the border of *sanskar* in the *sanskriti* safety zone yet still having the opportunity to enjoy fellowship with friends and family during times of festivals. There appears to be much freedom among Christians to do what seems right to each informant according to their own conscience. The bottom line is that *Tihar* and *Dashain*, the two large all-Nepali Hindu festivals, are steeped in rites and rituals which are Hindu ceremonial acts but, alongside that, they are also genuine family gatherings. Participation in these was re-negotiated by some on an individual basis, driven by concepts important to them such as family love.

The Christians are conscious of their national identity as Nepalis and many of the informants who contributed to the analysis of this chapter demonstrated an awareness to negotiate their boundaries in the best possible way. This means that they live as their own caste in their neighbourhood. In this way, the research question is answered as most of the *sanskriti* areas are unaffected by Christian principle except for the substantial Christian marker mentioned above with regard to intoxicants. Most areas relating to *sanskar*, however, are barred to Christians who avoid getting directly involved in *sanskar* matters. Some of the negotiations around daily traditional rituals and performances are hard-fought as Christians try to attain satisfactory compromises to compensate for the rejection of *sanskar* matters.

Certain markers are almost predisposed to change over the years. During the change from the Panchayat rule of government to the Democracy from 1990 and onwards, Christian attitudes have particularly changed. Persecution from local authorities against the Christians dropped drastically and many new opportunities were given to Christians who wanted to live in a new way, more urban-based or globalised which particularly appealed to the younger generation. Ways to negotiate new and old notions were bound to change. How things will continue to change only the future will tell but will moderate drinking one day become legitimate? What about more general participation in the all-Nepali festivals like *Dashain* and *Tihar* instead of focusing on organised church retreats?

A most interesting issue in this chapter is that Christian Nepalis, regardless of background and caste, literacy level and gender, act according to their own conscience, and have a high level of self-determination in navigating towards the fringe of *sanskar* from the *sanskriti* safety zone. This is called the self-determination factor in this thesis. The next chapter carries on analysing negotiating boundaries but focuses on negotiating relationships between Christians and their acquaintances and friends. From this chapter we have learned that Christians have a strong self-determination and some have a willingness to almost stand within *sanskar* which suggests that Christians may also be expected to behave individually in their negotiations with people. This will be considered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

6. Cross-Religious Relationship and Friendship

In this chapter I argue that the Christians of Asha Church engage with the traditional religious people and the rest of Nepalese society as opposed to being a secluded group of people.⁴³⁹ It is of great significance to examine Christians' involvement in matters related to their cross-religious relationships and friendships with traditional religious people with respect to the research question which is: In what ways and to what extent have Christians of this church (Asha Church) retained or changed their way of living after they have become Christians?

There is a continuum between two extreme values. At one extreme value, nothing has changed, there is no cultural discontinuity or transfer between the pre-converted and converted view of life.⁴⁴⁰ The other extreme value describes a Christian lifestyle where cross-religious interactions have changed radically; for example, Christians' intentional isolation from traditional religious people or traditional people who segregate Christians away from them; it is possible to imagine other kinds of scenario, too, in which Christians become isolated. We shall see that the afore-mentioned extreme values in this continuum make good sense from the grounded data.

⁴³⁹ The non-believers (as Christians often call themselves believers), traditional religious people (TRP) or just traditional people are terms I have given to categorise all the people of Nepal who belong to the traditional Nepali religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Bon, animism/shamanism and smaller Hindu related religions. Islam and Catholicism are not seen either as traditional Nepali, even though they have existed in Asia hundreds of years, or as part of evangelical Christianity; they will be specifically mentioned when needed

⁴⁴⁰ Chua, 2012, 513

This part of the research is made credible from the development through the Grounded Theory Analysis strategy (GTA), primarily based on one of the categories. There are four main categories in the final Code System (H) of this research (Table 1, p. 23) but this category, CROSS-RELIGIOUS RELATIONSHIPS AND FRIENDSHIPS, (Figure 12) has proven to be more comprehensive than the other categories and relates in many areas to other categories. According to Juliet Corbin, such an all-embracing category is similar to a core category and represents what she calls a phenomenon; in this thesis it is called a factor (p. 263).⁴⁴¹ CROSS-RELIGIOUS RELATIONSHIPS AND FRIENDSHIPS was a concept that I already had in mind at an early stage, but informants' varying experiences in the data segments have given me a broader understanding of its meaning. There are other categories which will also be used because there are data segments conceptualised which may help shed light on certain relationship issues. Figure 12, which is an extract of Table 1 (right-hand column), shows the category at the root of three high-level concepts.

⁴⁴¹ Corbin, 2008, 104-105, 266

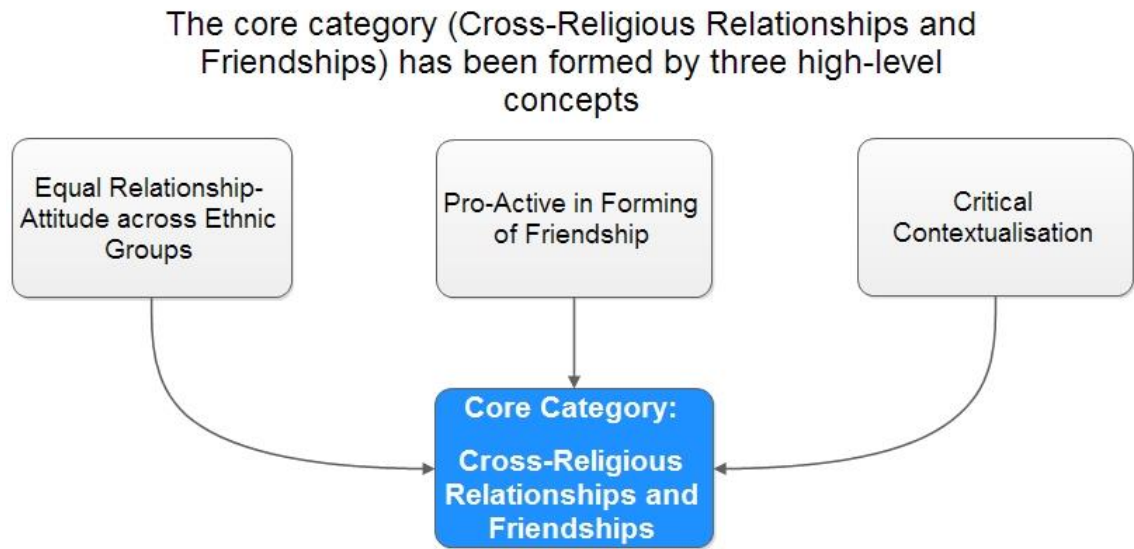


Figure 12: Grounded Theory: CROSS-RELIGIOUS RELATIONSHIPS AND FRIENDSHIPS

This anthropological research has taught me that cultural matters are rarely black and white. Each informant has talked about religious and social factors in different ways and at different lengths. I have a need to obtain a clear view of the Christians' attitude and approach to the traditional Nepalis. Consequently, I am in need of a system or a method which can transform such non-comparable data segments into a taxonomy of easily comparable values. For that I need a qualifier that each data segment can be measured against and then, depending on the outcome, evaluate or assess each outcome with a value. The values from each data segment chosen are simple integers because integers are easily comparable. Each informant may have stated different attitudes and approaches on a given topic therefore the average value will be used corresponding to the average response of that informant. The complexity of the socio-religious data, meanwhile, gives rise to the use of more than one qualifier, but does not change the basic idea of the method I use to assess data segments.

From the grounded data there is evidence that there is a difference between relationships and genuine friendships. Therefore two kinds of researches have been undertaken in this chapter. An informant has his natural circle of acquaintances which for most people would be the informant's family including the wider family, neighbours, work colleagues, study peers and others at educational institutions, the informant's associates and connections in the bazaar, and people in neighbouring villages. There are many other contacts, for example, caste related, business related or social contacts. These are all relationships. A friendship is closer than a relationship, it is what is normally understood as a friendship between two people. A definition of a friendship is given below (Section 6.3).

This chapter is divided into three parts: The Part I concerns the cross-religious relationships. There are two sections, the first is theoretical and concerns anthropological and theological issues with the aim of generating suitable qualifiers for assessing the most complex of data segments (Section 6.1), the second section analyses Christians' relationships with traditional religious people, the most complex of the data segments (Section 6.2). Part II concerns the cross-religious friendships; this has two sections. The first section aims at generating a qualifier (Section 6.3) and the second focuses on analysing the friendships between Christians and traditional religious people (Section 6.4). Part III makes an attempt to assess a possible correlation between the two main results from the first two parts (Section 6.5), see Overview below (Table 13).

Chapter Overview	
<p>Part I Cross-Religious Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generation of Qualifiers (Section 6.1) • Analysis (Section 6.2) <p>Part II Cross-Religious Friendships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generation of Qualifier (Section 6.3) • Analysis (Section 6.4) <p>Part III Correlation between Part I and Part II (Section 6.5)</p>	

Table 13: Chapter Overview

6.1 Cross-Religious Relationships – Generation of Qualifiers

As this thesis focuses on the interaction between Nepali Christians and the traditional religious people of Nepal, the notion of negotiating boundaries figures prominently in the analysis of data, which includes ideas, beliefs and practices from the Christian view of life, and other possible ways of living in or among the traditional Nepali socio-religious people.⁴⁴² There have been propagators of Christian belief since the early church and they have reached far around the world. Lately a focus for negotiating the boundaries has widened among missionaries. Within the last fifty years, it has become contextualised, to use the missionaries' own term. Contextualisation is a post-colonial notion established in the early 1970s, according to David Bosch.⁴⁴³ In varying degrees, the method of contextualisation, which Timoteo Gener suggested meant 'doing theology ourselves,' had been identified earlier in different places as forward-looking missionaries consciously negotiated their Christian message through different traditional cultures, but these days this way of approaching new cultures with the

⁴⁴² Grayson, 1985, 1

⁴⁴³ Bosch, 1991, 420

Christian message is integrated into most missionary training programmes. Roland Allen wrote, back in 1912: ⁴⁴⁴

We can gather in converts, we often gather in large numbers; but we cannot train them to maintain their own spiritual life. We cannot establish the church on a self-supporting basis. Our converts often display great virtues, but they remain, too often for generations, dependent upon us. Having gathered a Christian congregation the missionary is too often tied to it and so hindered from further evangelistic work. This difficulty unquestionably arises from our early training of our converts, and therefore it is of supreme importance that we should endeavour to discover, as far as we can, the method of St Paul in training his. For he succeeded exactly where we fail. ⁴⁴⁵

Allen claims that converts often stay reliant on missionaries, even for generations. This is written in 1912 meaning that he has observed issues going back into the nineteenth century. ⁴⁴⁶ The ‘problem’ of advocating a religious conviction in another culture without making a cultural approach demonstrates either a lack of respect, a lack of understanding of other people or even an abridged perception of the Christian belief, sometimes with grave consequences for the converted. Daniel Shaw says, ‘People act out their lives in real circumstances. The scriptures must come to people in forms that are as real as their own lives.’ ⁴⁴⁷ The implication of advocating scriptural truths to real people in real circumstances may demand a Christian integrity in words and acts, and it must be practical and the message tangible (this latter criterion was addressed in Chapter 4).

⁴⁴⁴ Gener, 2005, 4

⁴⁴⁵ Allen, 1962, 82

⁴⁴⁶ William Macfarlane, for example, although not aware of this discipline of missiology, clearly possessed a negotiating approach due to his preaching and teaching in the vernacular and his involvement with the local people

⁴⁴⁷ Shaw, 1989, 156

Theological terms more narrow in scope have been used in missionary literature within the more generic notion of ‘contextualisation’. However, an understanding of such terms has not proven consistent among scholars which is the reason the ordinary notions of ‘integration’, ‘inculturation’, and the anthropological expression of ‘negotiation of boundaries’ and others have been chosen in this thesis to explain the way Christians adapt their message and lifestyle into the Nepalese socio-religious surroundings, especially with a focus on traditional religious people, except when referred to by scholars.⁴⁴⁸ This is, meanwhile, essential to grasp the challenges the Nepali church has faced and still faces in Nepalese society and to perceive the way it has developed.

6.1.1 Anthropological Considerations - Inculturation

Christian belief in the Nepalese culture is legitimised from the stance that no culture is superior to other cultures. Gener talks about the development of Christians in their own culture through the process of redeeming their culture, another way of referring to local theology.⁴⁴⁹ The view of this thesis is that there is, ideally, no normative culture from a biblical perspective. Daniel Sanchez says that ‘the important thing ... is that scripture and not the socio-cultural context be normative in the process of theological reflection.’⁴⁵⁰ Obviously different biblical accounts each in their own ways portray and express different cultural forms of socio-cultures, real cultural descriptions from Middle Eastern, Oriental, Greek, Egyptian, Roman etc. traditions through a given time period according to the different biblical histories and narratives. But one specific culture does not seem to be more correct than another culture in the bible. In an earlier chapter I

⁴⁴⁸ Bosch, 1991, 421; Other notions used along different types of theological models (simplified): indigenisation model which comprises translation and inculturation models, and socio-economic model which comprises evolutionary and revolutionary models

⁴⁴⁹ Gener, 2005, 18

⁴⁵⁰ Sanchez, 2015

emphasised the key role of house fellowships (Section 3.4, p. 100). I made it clear that, since the core of Christianity is without many outward rites and rituals, Christianity should be adaptable to different traditions including the Nepalese society. Today, Christianity exists and endures in military, totalitarian and theocratic regimes plus communist and fascist areas of the world as well as in local traditional societies, and of course in the democratic world. In addition, there are a great number of sub-cultural domains where evangelical Christianity prospers such as hospitals, jails, motorcycle clubs, and different Christian music genres.⁴⁵¹ Evangelical Christianity has in fact been able to adapt to a great variety of cultures. It would be difficult to assert that Christianity prospers better in one kind of culture or under a given governmental rule than another or that Christianity does not work in certain cultures. See, though, the section about Christian generations (Section 3.5, p. 105). Below I give some examples from theologians and anthropologists which describe some of the challenges cross-cultural mission faces. The key information is useful as material to engender qualifiers.

In the twentieth century, missionary Donald McGavran further developed Wascom Pickett's survey of Indian Christian conversions and identified a multi-individual, mutually interdependent conversion.⁴⁵² Among the advantages such a multi-individual (group) conversion offered to the Indian Christian was, first, the protection from social dislocation. Social dislocation often led to an unhealthy dependency on the missionaries socially, economically and theologically, and converts consequently regarded themselves as a detached and deprived people. Multi-individual conversions largely

⁴⁵¹ Hospital: Hariya Karka, Pokhara; Jail: This information is from a testimony given by missionary Heidi Baker during a conference in Denmark 7-10 May 2015; Motorcycle clubs: Exodus MC, Property of Jesus Christ - De kristne bikere; Christian Music: Christian jazz, Gospel music, Christian rock etc.

⁴⁵² McGavran, 1990, 340

preserved social integration.⁴⁵³ Secondly, this integration also achieved a reduction in identifying Christianity with other cultural issues giving Indian Christians a sense of self-respect. A third advantage was the increased ability to bear witness to other groups.⁴⁵⁴ Multi-individual conversion was an early proactive approach to negotiating Christian boundaries in Indian culture.

Dean Gilliland recounts an event from Nigeria where a cultural misinterpretation had distressing consequences of dislocation (Appendix E). In the 1930s, missionaries to Nigeria taught married couples to eat together as this was the habit of missionaries. This particular habit where husband and wife eat together is considered strange in West African countries. In a village, a new Christian Nigerian couple started to eat together in front of the whole village as they were instructed to but before long they were ridiculed by family and friends. They had to leave the village and live quite separately from the rest of their kin. The consequence of this move by this couple was that a small 'Christian village' grew up apart from the rest of the people as new Christian believers moved to this small village. Being a Christian meant dislocation instead of reconciliation. Instead of being a force for transformation, Christianity fostered separation.⁴⁵⁵

Paul Hiebert maintained that, compared to the era before that consciously and strategically negotiated the boundaries of the Christian belief system, the approach has become less western, and tends to avoid ethnocentrism of a mono-cultural approach,

⁴⁵³ Pickett, 1933, 320

⁴⁵⁴ Pickett, 1933, 322

⁴⁵⁵ Gilliland, 1998, 122-123 Brief summary; The full excerpt is shown in Appendix E.; Davis, 2005, 47

and it recognises the right of every church to develop its own local theology.⁴⁵⁶ Hiebert declared that ‘most Protestant missionaries in India and later in Africa approximately [from 1850-1950] rejected the pagan beliefs and practices where they served,’ and he quotes John Pobee who reflects on the common positions of the missionaries of that time: ‘There is nothing in the non-Christian culture on which the Christian missionary can build and, therefore, every aspect of the traditional non-Christian culture had to be destroyed before Christianity could be built up.’⁴⁵⁷ Missionaries’ mono-cultural approach in this socio-cultural pre-negotiating era is deeply ingrained in the minds of great numbers of Africans, as Kwame Bediako describes it; he concludes that the ‘planting and existence of Christianity in Africa cannot be separated from the history of the missionary outreach and exertion of the Christian Churches of the Western European world ...’⁴⁵⁸ Bediako, quoting Adrian Hastings, says: ‘treat everything pre-Christian in Africa as either harmful or at best valueless ...’⁴⁵⁹ This sort of attitude was held by many missionaries and Bediako notes that it has affected Christian belief in great areas of Africa. Bediako points out that this attitude has its origin from an earlier century at the time of trade and slavery.⁴⁶⁰ This European evaluation of the many African peoples in the pre-Christian era formed the European mind-set about the Africans and the way they shared the gospel which, according to Bediako, appeared more like a civilisation implant than a missional outreach.

Chris Sugden’s research portrays the Balinese theologian I. Wayan Mastra’s missionary functional approach as a development in ‘response to a sustained debate in Bali over the

⁴⁵⁶ Hiebert, 1994, 84-86;

⁴⁵⁷ Pobee, 1982, 168-72; Hiebert, 1994, 76

⁴⁵⁸ Bediako, 1999, 250

⁴⁵⁹ Hastings, 1967, 60; Bediako, 1999, 225

⁴⁶⁰ Bediako, 1999, 225-228

relationship between Christianity and Balinese culture.’⁴⁶¹ He writes that the ‘Balinese identity was removed in becoming Christians. They were forced out of their own Balinese community, and were offered a new identity in the Christian community which was alien to them.’⁴⁶² Mastra, therefore, developed a Contextualisation Programme and a theology in which the identities of the Balinese were retained.⁴⁶³ Ed Lapiz made a list of ten points of indigenous worship in the Philippines many of which remind one of Mastra’s topics. He explains how the church, when it came in 1521, approached these different practices with western-style worship resulting in what could be called a disengagement programme. As Lapiz’ approach has it, ‘western thought divides everything.’⁴⁶⁴

Hiebert broaches another significant issue:

Christians in other lands are often confused by the western obsession with order and lack of relational skills. Westerners rarely open our homes spontaneously to visitors. We are more interested in keeping our possessions than sharing them ...⁴⁶⁵

Hiebert points to Westerners’ obsession with systems and order at the cost of their often limited social and relational skills, the consequences of which are worrying in majority world countries.

6.1.2 Critical Inculturation and the Use of Qualifiers

This section will identify the more important points that signify the kinds of approach Christians, missionaries or churches need to incorporate when working cross-culturally

⁴⁶¹ Sugden, 1997, 44

⁴⁶² Sugden, 1997, 56

⁴⁶³ Appendix D; Sugden, 1997, 127, 129, 141

⁴⁶⁴ Lapiz, 2005, 176-177, 182

⁴⁶⁵ Hiebert, 1994, 144;

or among people who have no Christian background. From this information qualifiers are developed.

By looking into the experiences of missionaries and anthropologists (Section 6.1.1) their different cross-cultural attitudes demonstrated different ways of approaching the local people in the process of rooting Christianity in that culture. It varied from being beneficial to harmful both within local social structures and regarding cultural forms of the Christian belief.⁴⁶⁶ Avoiding social dislocation and pointing at issues relating to social integration are significant key elements to secure the conditions for a successful embedding of Christianity into other cultures. Social skills are particularly important in most majority world countries, including Nepal, compared with western countries. Taking Christianity into a new culture is a great challenge and has not always been a success. People have been socially dislocated, cultures have been destroyed, and there have been tensions between propagators and receivers. There have, though, been theological and practical areas where the proliferation of the belief has gone well.

Both McGavran and Mastra achieved great successes in India and Bali by using their contextualisation principles. Gilliland, Bediako and Hiebert's experiences shed light on some of the problems any propagator of the Christian belief system would like to avoid. With these points in mind, and a few other personal add-on points, a set of qualifiers to assess to what extent Christian informants have isolated themselves or are fully a part of the Nepalese society - or something in between - has been developed.

⁴⁶⁶ Hiebert, 1994, 84

Description of Qualifiers (Cross-Religious Relationships)	
Q1	Multi-individual conversions (for example in villages)
Q2	Sense of integration vs. loneliness among peers ⁴⁶⁷
Q3	Stimulation of local culture ⁴⁶⁸
Q4	Ability and skill to negotiate personal Christian boundaries, for example on <i>bhai-tika</i> and <i>Dashain</i> but also the challenges on a daily basis ⁴⁶⁷
Q5	Maintaining local identities or self-respect
Q6	Pro-active involvement in own community or love for local people
Q7	Participating in cultural songs/rhythms/dances/local food (<i>sanskriti</i>)
Q8	Participating in cultural ceremonies (wedding, funeral, festivals etc., <i>sanskar</i>)
Q9	Social networking and friends among local people and good family relations

Table 14: Description of Qualifiers

A single qualifier, Q_n (n=1,2,...,9), qualifies a data segment from a given perspective described by the qualifier (Table 14); this generates a value, an integer, based on a personal assessment, which is attached to this particular data segment. A value belongs in the range from -10 to +10 (Appendix F) which is a range, on the one hand, randomly chosen, on the other hand, chosen so that there are enough, yet not too many, values to choose between. The fewer the number of qualifiers the more definitive statements on the issue need to be worked out, also the more abstract and difficult do they appear as qualifiers. The greater number of qualifiers the more exact the final result and the easier to determine as qualifiers, but also the more cumbersome and redundant is the work matching all interesting data segments with each of these qualifiers. Having looked at the qualifiers I chose to devise nine to assess the cross-religious relationships of the thirty-five informants (Table 14). They were created based on the information from the missionaries and anthropologists (Section 6.1.1) and from my own experience. While

⁴⁶⁷ Add-on qualifiers from the research elsewhere

⁴⁶⁸ Sugden, 1997, 129

defining qualifiers, many ideas and perspectives are employed but I found it important to keep the number down to keep focus.

6.2 Cross-Religious Relationships – Analysis

With these nine qualifiers at hand, interviews can be examined with respect to informants' attitudes to their former life, culture, belonging, pro-active involvement etc. with a reasonable degree of consistency. This produces a diagram (Figure 13) which is a presentation of their attitude and approach to the Nepali people. The main target is to look at the interaction between the Nepali Christians and the traditional religious people to analyse whether they are involved with the traditional people or whether they are isolated. Systematic categorising of reasons for different kinds of interaction would be interesting but is not the target. Therefore the focus is to keep a construct of interaction. No informant talks about issues that relate to all qualifiers as they express themselves in different ways because of the nature of the interviews. There are 232 coded data segments which are relevant for this examination. They are all assessed which gives on average 6-7 segments per informant (as there are thirty-five informants) but distributed unequally; some informants give extensive explanations whereas other informants only offer brief hints.

Values are given by reading through data segments and relating them specifically to the issue of cross-religious relationships; simple assessments are made in relation to each of the nine qualifiers. This generates assessed values on a particular data segment from the perspective of each qualifier. These values are recorded in a table (Appendix F). One or several qualifiers may not give any meaning to a particular data segment in which case there are no values taken down. Each data segment can contain a maximum of nine values, a value for each qualifier.

The average value for each informant is computed and also recorded in the same table. These average or mean values for each informant which are based on subjective assessments should not be scrutinised in the same way as when handling quantitative data as these data are based on qualitative data and no two interviews follow the same pattern. The mapped mean values of the informants (mapped in Figure 13) indicate to the reader whether they are involved with people or stay as an isolated group of Christians. According to Figure 13, there were, for example, seven informants who obtained a level of cross-religious relationships in position 5 (mean value 5), and one informant obtained a level of cross-religious relationship in position -2.

Code System and Categories	
The final Code System (H) consists of four categories. The core category CROSS-RELIGIOUS RELATIONSHIPS AND FRIENDSHIPS is used in this chapter (see also Figure 12).	
Religious Dynamics between the two Cultures Power Encounter Examples Spiritual	This category did not produce a chapter in itself, but the data as they emerged through Grounded Theory was helpful in the chapter on conversion (Chapter 4) - and some were also helpful in (Chapter 6)
Forming Christian Identity Lifestyle after Conversion Being a Christian Nepali in a Predominantly Hindu Culture Christian Nepalese Stereotypes and Markers	This category encapsulates thoughts and ways of informants in the process of the adaptation of Nepalese Christianity into the Nepalese society (Chapter 5)
Nepalese culture & Traditional Religions Sanskar Issues - Ritually Christians and Ritual Practices Rituals Sanskriti Issues - All Nepalese Syncretism and Nominalism Christians in <i>Sanskriti</i>	This category is used to develop and devise a tool to facilitate comprehension of the way Christians negotiate their boundaries (Chapter 5) - and some were also helpful in (Chapter 6)
Cross-Religious Relationships and Friendships Equal Relationship-Attitude across Ethnic Groups Pro-Active in Forming of Friendship Critical Contextualisation	The level at which Christians of Asha Church engage with the traditional religious people and the Nepalese society as opposed to being a secluded group of Christian people (Chapter 6)

Table 15: Code System (H) - Categories and Explanation

The qualifiers (Table 14) were applied to all interviews in this part of the research. The Code System (Table 15) shows that there are four categories (main concepts).

Therefore, instead of reading the entire data material and comparing all the qualifiers and value-assessing them to obtain the social attitude of each informant, I can concentrate on the data segments conceptualised in the categories relevant for this which are: CROSS-RELIGIOUS RELATIONSHIPS AND FRIENDSHIPS, NEPALESE CULTURE & TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS and the category RELIGIOUS DYNAMICS BETWEEN THE TWO CULTURES. From these three categories, where the most significant is the first (Figure 12, p. 215), 232 data segments are extracted. Obviously, there are more data which could produce material for this but 232 data segments jointly give a good representation of the general attitude among the informants. The values of the data segments which are assessed in being measured up against the qualifiers are mapped in the table in Appendix F where also 'Start' and 'End' position markers of the actual transcribed data paragraph(s) are given for future reference or enquiry. The mapped values are portrayed in Figure 13.

Explanation of Figure 13	
<p>The qualifiers are devised to look from the perspective where Christian Nepalis are attempting to get involved with local people and supporting social integration in local activities and lifestyle. Any signal, activity or approach within this understanding of such a data segment will provide values to that data segment towards the right of the continuum which are positive, from 0 to +10. Conversely, if Christians try and avoid getting involved with the local people, the qualified values attached to the data segments become negative, that is on the left side of the continuum, from 0 to -10.</p>	<p>This means that the extreme case is that Christians tend to get isolated as in a local ghetto community of Christians; it is axiomatic that no message or lifestyle can get embedded in a culture it is not part of, and as Christianity inherently is a belief system encouraging personal relations, isolation can never be the end-goal, although there may be reasons, personal or other, for staying low temporarily. The analysis of the continuum from -10 to +10 is to identify where the informants are placed. Are they primarily positioned in the area of passivity and an uninterested attitude to the local people on the left side or have they positioned themselves in a proactive involvement with these same traditional religious people on the right side, or is it between the two?</p>

Table 16: Explanation of Cross-Religious Relationship

Although the continuum goes from -10 to +10 (twenty-one values as zero is included) it can more roughly be divided into four ‘quarter’ parts (Figure 13):

Negative Half of the Continuum:

- the low fourth quarter (-10 to -6)
- the low centre quarter (-5 to 0)

Positive Half of the Continuum:

- the high centre quarter (0 to +5)
- and the top fourth quarter (+6 to +10)

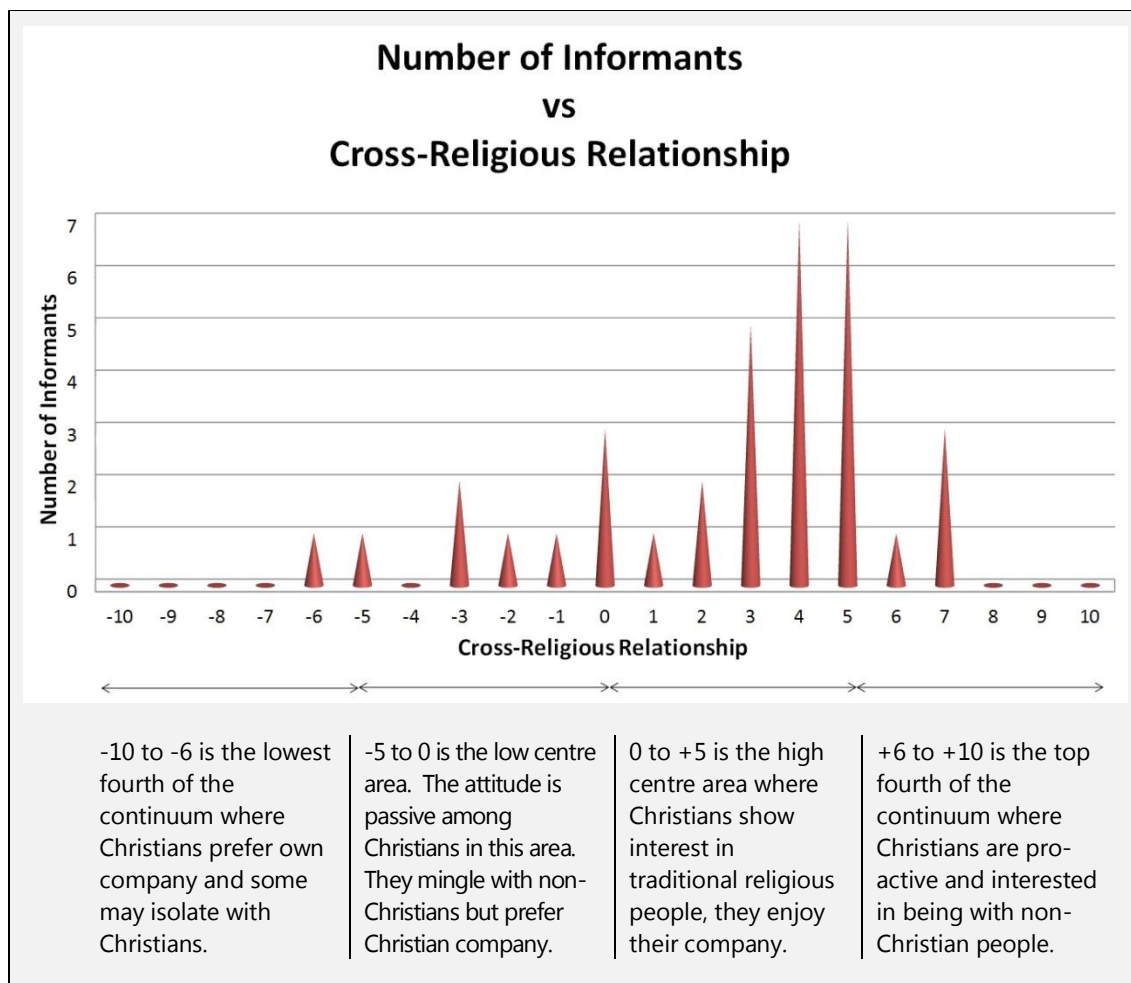


Figure 13: Cross-Religious Relationships

6.2.1 Strategy of Value Assessment of the Qualifiers

I offer four examples in this section: one from the lowest quarter of the continuum, one average informant which happens to be the high centre quarter, one from the top quarter of the continuum, and one example that came out differently than expected, right in the middle at '0' (zero). This demonstration makes it easier to comprehend the way informants describe and express themselves regarding the way they get involved with ordinary Nepalis or traditional religious people and their attitude and general approach to people who are not Christians and to demonstrate the way I assess these descriptions and expressions.

6.2.1.1 Low Level Involvement in Cross-Religious Relationship

Ganesh Lama (age 24) is a pleasant but a timid young man from Nuwakot who does not trust traditional religious people, at least not those whom he does not know well.

I-num	Informant "name"	Start Position	End Position	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Σ/(n)
I-19	Ganesh Lama	7	7									-5		
		9	9							-8				
		11	11		-2							-7		-6

Table 17: Extract of Qualified Values of Data Segments (I-19)

In replying to the following question he says:

If a traditional religious Nepali invites you for Dalbhat would you go?
 If somebody invites me for *dalbhat* I would go if it was a relative, but if it was not an *aphno manchhe* (a relative) I would not go. If somebody from the Tamang tribe invites us we may have problems, especially if they invite us for food. They may put poison in the food. They may like to kill us. I have fear that this may happen to me, I know of one incident where it happened. I do not know why they would do this. The poison is a slow poison so that people die slowly. Some people are jealous of the Christians; therefore they kill them in this way.⁴⁶⁹

This attitude, which I have heard before in another area, towards the traditional religious people is not helpful for building bridges and setting up relationships between Christians and traditional communities; so Q7 (Table 14, p. 225) was assessed to be -8.

He later added the following reply to my question:

Do you feel respected by other Nepalis? No, they treat me differently. Even within my own family, they do not accept me as they accept non-believers, because I am Christian. In the bazaar there is no

⁴⁶⁹ I-19/9

difference, the prices are the same, but when I meet my own relatives they discriminate between me and non-believers, not in the society.⁴⁷⁰

He has not managed to negotiate his personal boundaries with non-believers and with his relatives successfully which he communicates clearly from this data segment. It is possible to assess more than one qualifier based on this single paragraph. When I assess qualifiers, I decide to what extent it is necessary to assess many qualifiers. In this situation, I decided to choose two, Q2 and Q9 (Table 17) because these two qualifiers in particular focus on integration and fellowship with local people which are his main topics. Altogether four qualified assessments were done while assessing this informant. The mean value of these values is -6; this value is positioned in the right black column at Table 17 and is the value used in Figure 13 at position -6. He is the only one who obtained the value -6, therefore the vertical value at -6 is +1. In the same way, with the other informants, only mean values are used to build up the diagram.

6.2.1.2 Average Involvement in Cross-Religious Relationship

Sunita Maya (Section 4.1.2, p. 134) has the mean value +3 which is close to the average of all informants. In many ways, even though case selections vary between the districts (Section 2.2, p. 28), she represents a typical Christian of the Asha Church, a young mother with a child on her arm and having a strong belief in Jesus Christ. This is to a large extent a recognisable Nepalese lifestyle both in Gorkha, Tanahun, Nuwakot and in Kathmandu and elsewhere. She lives in the rural area and although she has a determined mind, which may give the local traditional people reason to evaluate her belief as a Christian exclusive - much like the Panchayat Generation (Section 3.5.1, p. 109) - she is also a Nepali and loves her culture. She says:

⁴⁷⁰ I-19/11

One of my mother's brothers is a *lambru* (priest), whenever we used to visit him he was never at home. Every time he would be out, because Christian people have power. Non-believers do not find any behavioural difference between the Christians and the Buddhists in the bazaar.⁴⁷¹

I-num	Informant "name"	Start Position	End Position	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Σ/(n)
I-15	Sunita Maya Tamang	8	8						5					
		9	9			5		2						
		10	11					1						3

Table 18: Extract of Qualified Values of Data Segments (I-15)

From the context, it is clear that she is of the conviction that Christian people have power, therefore, she fully understands the reason why the *lambru* disappears when they visit. These attempts to meet socially with some of her relatives, therefore, did not go well, but the fact that they tried several times to meet with their family is a positive approach. In addition, she points to her experience in the bazaar as she explains that non-believers do not distinguish between Christians and non-Christians which is helpful when maintaining a local identity and self-respect. Some non-believers show respect to the Christians in the following way:

How do people react when you meet them outside your society? Non-believers say that Christians are good and educated people, and they keep a hygienic standard out and at home and with their children. They are concerned about child education. The non-believers show respect to the believers because of these things.⁴⁷²

These sentences demonstrate a respect from the traditional local people to the Christians but digging into the text it does not contribute much to the cross-religious relationship

⁴⁷¹ I-15/9

⁴⁷² I-15/10

between them. It is recognised from this segment that the traditional religious people have respect for the Christians for some real reasons and this gives the Christians an opportunity for self-respect.⁴⁷³ The qualifier, Q5, for ‘Maintaining of local identities or self-respect’, is the most meaningful for this segment; with this as qualifier the segment has been assessed to the value +1.

6.2.1.3 High Level Involvement in Cross-Religious Relationship

This example of love which stands out among all the examples illustrates what proactive involvement can bring about. This event was reported and undertaken by the wife of the informant. She describes her own thoughts about the life situation of their next-door neighbours. The outcome was those acts of love which resulted in two conversions. The wife narrates:

I was praying to God about one, just one neighbour, who would become Christian. The answer of prayer was like this. One day, one of my Buddhist neighbours became sick, at that time no one could help him. But I went to that home and cleaned the entire home, it was very dirty, and I cleaned everything and gave food and encouragement. After a long time he was healed. Seeing all these good deeds this Buddhist one day became a Christian, now he is a strong baptised believer, also his wife is a believer. One of my brothers is a *lama* came and asked: ‘Why are you leaving our Buddhist religion and following a foreign religion?’ He answered, ‘When I was ill, no one came from the Buddhist community to help me but Christian ‘auntie’ came and helped when I was ill. That is why I became Christian. I saw the love of Jesus in their deeds and their hearts.’⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷³ I-02/44, I-04/21, I-15/10

⁴⁷⁴ I-06/17

I-num	Informant "name"	Start Position	End Position	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	$\Sigma/(n)$
I-06	Tek Bahadur Tamang	8	8						10					
		11	11			5		5						
		17	17						10					
		6	7									5		7

Table 19: Extract of Qualified Values of Data Segments (I-06)

The Buddhist next door was healed but the help of the wife of the informant convinced them that Christianity was true. The neighbour said ‘I saw the love of Jesus in their deeds and their hearts.’ Life in the villages is demanding and not many have extra energy; therefore, to have the strength to help other people in this way is extraordinary; it must be understood from the context of prayer, ‘I was praying to God ...’ and subsequent love, ‘I saw the love ...’ Consequently, the qualified value for this data segment of pro-active involvement was assessed at +10 which is the maximum value. I have taken the husband and wife to be one informant, so to speak, as she got involved in many of the issues discussed, and they seemed to have a common attitude to the issues that concerned me. Merging two people in this way into one informant, at least for this part of the interview, may appear provocative but they seemed to support and supplement each other in a beneficial way with a common attitude on issues. Therefore, it was refreshing to have input from a couple.

6.2.1.4 Different Level of Involvement when Measured with these Qualifiers

Ghaman Tamang from the youth church in Kathmandu gave the impression of having a welcoming attitude towards many different castes, even so, he came out with a ‘zero’ which is below average for the informants. The values of Q2 and Q4 (Table 20) are lower than the mean value of Ghaman’s qualifiers. In one of the data segments he says:

I have a lot of Hindu and Buddhist friends. I have not experienced much problems and troubles with friends, but sometimes we used to have debate on the topic of religion and God. When we have debate, it is sometimes difficult for me to explain why we do not put on *tika* and offer sacrifices to idols, but I do not have any problems with my friends. I just explain that I do not put on *tika* and sacrifice to idols. *Do you understand why you do not take on tika?* Yes, I understand but it is difficult to explain. Talking about fun, most of my friends they drink and smoke which I do not do. I may seem a bit odd to them, and first they accuse me for not taking the stuff, why not? But now they understand it, and they do not force me to.⁴⁷⁵

He finds it difficult to explain why he does not take *tika*, why he does not drink and smoke and, as a consequence, he believes that he may seem odd to his peers. This demonstrates to me that his ability to negotiate these boundaries is limited, and consequently he is not competent to defend his own views which present him with challenges. As a young man, he may still be led by his parents' or his church's belief system because he has not yet shaped his own personal beliefs in a way he can find fully trustworthy and therefore defend. Therefore, he cannot explain why he does not take *tika* which should not be a difficult task for a student (Table 12, p. 180).⁴⁷⁶

I-num	Informant "name"	Start Position	End Position	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Σ/(n)
I-28	Ghaman Tamang	5	5		-5		-5					5		
		9	10						-2			6		
		11	11		0									0

Table 20: Extract of Qualified Values of Data Segments (I-28)

However, it is a fact that he has a lot of friends among the Buddhists despite these setbacks, as he says elsewhere: 'if I have got a good friendship I do not care whether he

⁴⁷⁵ I-28/5

⁴⁷⁶ Admittedly, *tika* is a challenge due to its many explanations but the use of *tika* is important from a Hindu perspective regardless of how it is perceived, therefore one may wonder why Christian students are not better able to debate with the Hindus or the Buddhists

is a Hindu, Buddhist or a Christian.⁴⁷⁷ This statement is strong and, therefore, I gave him for Q9 the value +6 attached to this data segment. Ghaman’s input was interesting because when data were scrutinised against these qualifiers, the output was different than expected. This is because the qualifiers opened up a specific socio-religious domain where Ghaman was less capable of negotiating his boundaries, even though his peer integration otherwise was exemplary as he had cross-religious relationships and friends.

6.2.2 Summary of Qualifiers

6.2.2.1 Mean Value of Qualifiers

The data (Appendix F) includes more information than this as the mean value of each of the qualifiers has been computed.

		Start Position	End Position	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Σ/(n)
Σ/(m)	Average Value Q's			5	0	3	3	3	5	4	3	4	3

Table 21: Mean Value of Qualifiers

The qualifiers that generated the highest values are Q1 and Q6. I find that the mean value of Q6 is more important than Q1 because twenty data segments contributed as input to this mean value compared with only five inputs for Q1. The Q6 qualifier looked at the ‘Pro-active involvement in own community or love for local people’ which gives substantial information because it points to informants like Tek Bahadur (and wife) who, through their action, managed to make a difference. This describes people who, on

⁴⁷⁷ I-28/10

their own initiative, get involved with people who are not Christians. In disregarding Q1 because of its relatively little impact, Q6 is flanked by two other qualifiers, Q7 (with twenty inputs) and Q9 (with forty-seven inputs), their mean values are four. They run parallel to Q6 although without the pro-active aspect (Table 14). These qualifiers touch on the *sanskriti* issue and demonstrate cross-religious relationships among non-Christians and in families. The Q9 qualifier represented 20% of the data segments which is a high value but this is not surprising since one of the main categories from where data were taken was specifically CROSS-RELIGIOUS RELATIONSHIPS AND FRIENDSHIPS.⁴⁷⁸

Those who fitted the qualifier ‘Sense of integration vs. loneliness among peers’ (Q2), which is the qualifier generating the lowest values, showed, on average, less sense of integration with peers or other people or a less embedded lifestyle in the Nepalese culture among their closest friends than they themselves actually expressed. The interpretation is that the areas within cross-religious relationships that seemed to provide the greatest challenges for the Christians were associated with their sense of belonging to those particular traditional people. The data are partly representative of different people with individual attitudes (Appendix F) and partly show that cross-religious relationships can be established superficially without the full sense of belonging.

The data segments of these four examples do not contain complex ambiguous information but are straightforward and understandable as are the rest of the data

⁴⁷⁸ 20% of the data segments concerned this particular qualifier; one informant might articulate this issue of ‘Social networking and friends among local people and good family relations’ (the Q9 qualifier) in various ways in different segments. Altogether twenty-one informants produced forty-seven data segments qualified by the Q9 qualifier from the selection of GTA categories chosen. There may be more in the rest of the data material but these data are reckoned to be sufficient

segments mostly, and therefore possible to interpret. Occasionally, an informant communicates information pointing in one direction in one segment and then seems to communicate the opposite or modified view in another segment. However, by using a reasonable number of qualifiers in each segment, they should balance each other out. Ghaman says in one segment that ‘I may seem a bit odd to them, and first they accuse me for not taking the stuff, why not?’ which is a rather apprehensive attitude and Q2 was given the value -5, but in another place he says ‘My friends do not take it seriously. They respect me but do not bother to take it seriously,’ which is communicated as being less offensive and Q2 was given the value ‘0’ (zero). In each of these two segments, he is clear in what he says but the two segments communicate two levels concerning his sense of integration. Therefore, the mean value is computed together with other values. Ghaman did have great differences in his values across the qualifiers, so he came out differently than expected.

These marginal segments are interesting to look at as they demonstrate what is involved when negotiating the boundaries with non-believers. One Christian is afraid they want to kill him while another spends a lot of time cleaning a house that is dirty. The latter, Tek Bahadur, says in another place ‘I helped them in various ways; I carried sick people on my back to the hospital and gave injections to sick animals,’ which obtained the value +10. Tek Bahadur testified to a healing from fear by Jesus Christ (p. 101) but in spite of his experience of divine intervention his approach is not to avoid any use of hospitals and syringes when he helps sick people and animals. This may even provide opportunities to spend time with people and their families in need. From this, we learn that Christians in Nepal are not limited to prayers alone as could have been interpreted from the analysis in Chapter 4 but also make use of other socio-religious tools.

6.2.3 Brief Summary of Diagram Results

Although the graph (Figure 13) appears detailed, it is necessary only to look at the main features of the diagram because of the nature of the data which are qualitative and not quantitative. The impression is that the majority of the informants are placed to the right of the continuum (71%), in the high centre or top fourth quarter, and not at the lowest fourth or low centre quarter (20%). At the centre point ('0'), there are a few informants (9%). The interpretation is that the diagram portrays informants as a group of Christians who by no means can be said to have isolated themselves or to have been segregated from the rest of the Nepali population. Obviously, there are informants who prefer Christian fellowship and look for this among people around them but they are a minority. The majority has good relationships among non-Christian Nepalis, and measured against the qualifiers the way I have chosen to form them they come out with the plotted values.

6.3 Cross-Religious Friendships – Generation of Qualifier

Is it possible for Christians and traditional religious people to form friendships together? Assuming such friendships to be possible they are expected to reinforce points from the section above (6.2). Relationships and friendships as concepts are of great significance in the analysis as the quality of Christians is often measured by the way they interact with people. This may not be specific to Christianity but as Christians are in opposition to the socio-religious traditions of Nepal they have placed themselves in a fragile position, particularly regarding their attitude to *tika* and *raksi*.

All the informants (100%) provided material about their attitude to cross-religious relationships with the traditional religious people as shown in the previous section (6.2). Just over half of the informants conveyed information specifically related to their

personal cross-religious friendships (54%). Therefore, it makes good sense to examine friendships. The remainder (46%) did not indicate whether they had friendships or not. The information is simply not there. In the former section (6.2) the cross-religious relationships data segments were complex; in contrast the data segments in this section, concerning personal cross-religious friendships, are easy to identify, distinct and easily understood, because of the way informants articulate such statements.

6.3.1 Personality Characteristics and Ways of Acting

Friendships among adults are expressed differently than those between teenagers or young people in their twenties or between, say, business partners but, given there is common ground, all these kinds of relationships can be subsumed within the same qualifier.

What does it take to be a good friend? In a little on-line follow-up ‘fieldwork’ research a few interviewees gave their personal responses to this question. Retrieving information from these first hand sources together with some of their data statements and from some second hand sources, I have made an attempt to answer this question in order to transform the data into a single qualifier for this part of the research.

Here are two replies, one from Sangita Lama (p. 158) and one from Pastor Tamang (p. 136): ⁴⁷⁹

To be a good and long lasting friend one need to be frank and friendly in communication, and other daily dealings too. (Sangita Lama)

In Nepal there is a saying: “You can leave your food but never your friends.”⁴⁸⁰ So friends are very important. To be a friend you must

⁴⁷⁹ These replies were received by Facebook and email.

have a listening patience and good communication, [and you must also be] faithful. See a [biblical] example of Jonathan and David.⁴⁸¹
(Pastor Tamang)

From the main fieldwork data, Shiva Kumari said about the traditional religious people:⁴⁸²

I do love them... I do pray for them, for the drivers, I do pray for my Hindu friends also so that they can also accept Christ. (Shiva Kumari)

In addition to this statement we remember the help given to their neighbours by Tek Bahadur and his wife (Section 6.2.1.3) which created a change and a new good relationship. These two informants in words and deeds touch on what informants in general find important in keeping and establishing friendships: to focus on other people and to be proactive in helping overcome challenges. Pastor Tamang draws attention to the example of David and Jonathan which may be a reminder of the institution of ritual friendships in Nepal.⁴⁸³

As second hand sources, I looked into two Asian online magazines, from India and Nepal, which in different ways treated the notion of friendship in a populist way. The rationale behind getting information from magazines is that they may provide a good

⁴⁸⁰ Pastor Tamang (2015) answered in a follow-up fieldwork answer online: What does it take to be a good friend? नेपालीमा उखान छ: गाँस छोड्नु तर साथी नछोड्नु

⁴⁸¹ Bible: 1 Samuel 18:1-5 'As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. And Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his armour, and even his sword and his bow and his belt. And David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him, so that Saul set him over the men of war. And this was good in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants.'

⁴⁸² I-29/13

⁴⁸³ Messerschmidt, 1982, 5-43; Even though ritual friendships as a cultural institution in the area of *sanskara* (due to its nature of often involving religious practitioners at the ceremonies) is widespread over a large number of different groups in Nepal, none of the informants drew attention to this during the interviews.

understanding of what is going on between people. Priya Gupta's two interviews in an Indian Bollywood magazine with the actor Chiranjeevi and a photographer Rohan Shrestha supply information about friendships. The actor explains that his friend is gentle, down to earth and passionate, and he says that his friend is close to him. The photographer talks about a female friend as being like him with a common background and with common interests; she is emotional, sensitive and vulnerable. He describes some of her characteristics and suggests that he appreciates them as part of their friendship. He also says that they are in contact almost every day. About another friend he says 'I love his energy, and the fact that he is very loyal. He stands by his friends ...'⁴⁸⁴ Bisheshta Shrestha wrote a little article in a Nepali youth magazine about guiding captains in schools. The article is not specifically about the issue of friendships but as captains are pupils in charge of other pupils in a school they have challenges with friendships as they lose trust among their peers. These are the key words extracted: trust, honesty and help.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸⁴ Gupta, 2015; Gupta, 2014

⁴⁸⁵ Shrestha, 2015

Personality Characteristics and Ways of Acting (Q: Appreciated Friendship Values)				
Informants:	Keyword 1	Keyword 2	Keyword 3	Keyword 4
Sangita Lama	Honesty	Presence & Communication		
Pastor Tamang	Dependable	Presence & Communication	Offering/Supporting Practical Help ⁴⁸⁶	
Shiva Kumari	Interceding & Loving			
Wife of Tek Bahadur		Presence	Offering Practical Help	
Priya Gupta	Gentle, Emotional, Sensitive, Vulnerable, Loyal	Presence & Common Interests		Passion & Energy
Bisheshta Shrestha	Trust, Honesty		Help	

Table 22: Characteristics of Friendships – Generation of Qualifier

6.3.1.1 Step 1: Examining the Content of the Table

In examining the table (Table 22) Priya Gupta and Bisheshta Shrestha are in line with the four informants except in the Keyword 4 column where Gupta points to two friendship characteristics which have a masculine nature as opposed to the rest of the table. Keyword 1 column covers a seeming variety of different notions but points towards western feminine values. Keyword 2 column concerns attentiveness and spending time with each other in a respectful and humble way. Keyword 3 column encompasses offering help when needed. Keyword 2 and 3 columns also comprise feminine values. The nature of the entire table is feminine from a western perspective if the single filled out cell of Keyword 4 column is toned down, according to Park, Nickols, Gerzema and Fonceca.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁶ ‘Offering/Supporting’ has been included based on the story of Jonathan and David which Pastor Tamang brought attention to (footnote 481)

⁴⁸⁷ Park, 2014; Nickols, 2012; Gerzema, 2013; Fonceca, 2012

6.3.1.2 Step 2: Critique of this Approach

It is not immediately transparent whether some of the values are masculine or feminine for two reasons. One is that, although there are traditional female and male values, there are a number of descriptive words which fall into grey areas, not least due to recent attention paid to the business world and other lifestyle sectors which has challenged many to reassess their approach to such human values. Masculine and feminine gender roles, therefore, do not necessarily preclude each other as only on rare occasions are situations solely masculine or feminine. The other reason is that western values, feminine or masculine, may not be universal and in Nepal or Asia generally there are other female values like chastity, purity, loyalty, hard work, and honesty, deference to men, self-denial and piety, according to Nonini, Dewey and Mookerjea-Leonard.⁴⁸⁸ Some of these values fall into a patriarchal power enforcement category from a western perspective. In summary, what seems to be female (or male) values from the table may not be directly translatable to western understanding as they are articulated by Nepalis who are south-east Asians.

6.3.1.3 Step 3: Use of an External Universal Tool

These values appear to be - regardless of whether the information in the table represents Nepali, Asian, western or even universal female values - describing personality characteristics and ways of acting which are appreciated in a Nepalese friendship. It is also possible to categorise these values as 'soft' personality characteristics and ways of acting as opposed to a more 'firm' expression in the Keyword 4 column. This word 'soft', together with western female values, ties in well with major parts of Richard T.

⁴⁸⁸ Nonini, 1998, 80; Dewey, 2012, 170; Mookerjea-Leonard, 2007, 9-12

Kinnier et al's 'A Short List of Universal Moral Values' of which point one (in part) and point three (in part) state (Table 23): ⁴⁸⁹

Kinnier's Universal Moral Values	
1.	Commitment to something greater than oneself
	b. To seek the Truth (or truths)
	c. To seek Justice
3.	Respect and caring for others (i.e. Golden Rule) ⁴⁹⁰
	b. To serve humankind and to be helpful to individuals
	c. To be caring, respectful, compassionate, tolerant, and forgiving of others

Table 23: Kinnier's Universal Moral Values

Since this is a commonly quoted universal list combining seven major religions including Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity it is also expected to relate to Nepal, taking its limitations into account.⁴⁹¹ The interchangeability of many of the concepts between the list and the table (Table 22) allows this list of Kinnier's to be used, thus avoiding a difficult cultural value translation between south-east Asian and western cultures and making it credible to use Appreciated Friendship Values as a qualifier to analyse data segments for possible friendships.

As this section aims to demonstrate friendship between Christians and non-Christians, this analysis can begin in the same way as with the analysis of the informants' cross-religious relationships (Section 6.2). All data segment values can be found in Appendix G.

⁴⁸⁹ Kinnier, 2000, 9-10

⁴⁹⁰ The Golden Rule: Bible: Matthew 7:12 'So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, ...'

⁴⁹¹ Kinnier, 2000, 7; There seems to be the following limitation according to the article: 'There may be a limited number of moral values that a large majority of people can accept.'

6.4 Cross-Religious Friendships – Analysis

Friends and Friendships are conceptualised in the GTA category CROSS-RELIGIOUS RELATIONSHIPS AND FRIENDSHIPS (Figure 12, p. 215). The choice of qualifier makes it possible to examine those who talk about friendships from the same consistent perspective. The data are, therefore, comparable. Figure 14 presents the qualified data.

Explanation of Figure 14
The horizontal line is arbitrarily chosen from -10 to +10 as it was in Part I (Figure 13). A value placed in the range from '0' to +10 indicates that the informant has an active friendship with a traditional religious Nepali. A value on the negative side signifies that the informant has a friendship with a traditional religious Nepali but faces challenges and the informant clearly prefers a Christian friendship instead of a cross-religious friendship. Alternatively such a cross-religious friendship does not exist for the informant. '0' means that an informant does have one or more friends among the traditional religious people but they may not be close friends and he might prefer Christian friendships.

Table 24: Explanation of Cross-Religious Friendships

A positive value indicates constructive attempts, and a negative value more problematic attempts, to negotiate boundaries between Christians and traditional religious Nepalis. All values are modified by the informants' individual attitudes to the situation. Firstly, I give three varied examples (Sections 6.4.1.1 - 6.4.1.3), then I discuss the challenges of cross-religious friendship from a Christian perspective and, lastly, I summarise the information in the diagram (Figure 14).

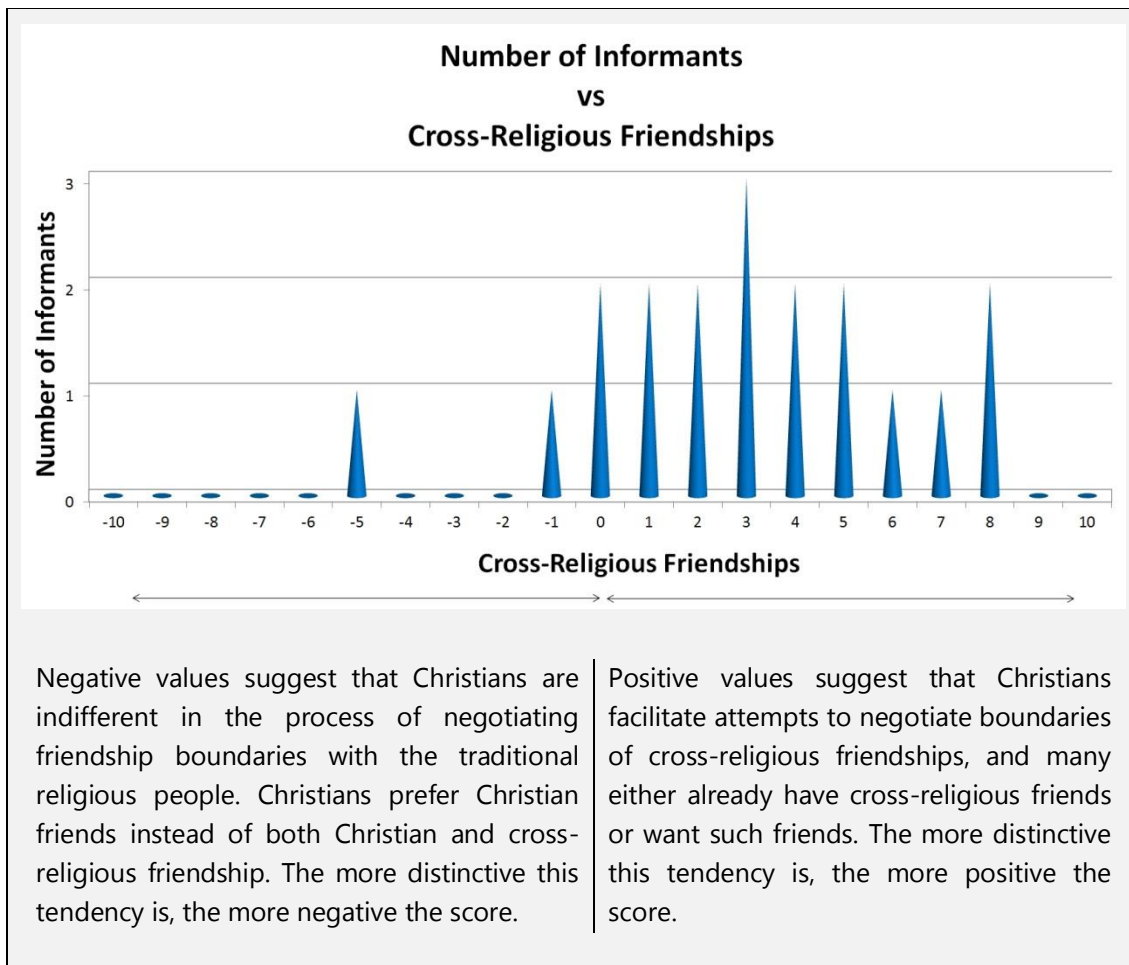


Figure 14: Cross-Religious Friendships

6.4.1 Three Cross-Religious Friendships

6.4.1.1 Friendship at Work

This is an example of a cross-religious friendship. Indra Kumari is working as a fruit-seller in the bazaar with some other fruit-sellers. She reports:

I do not work alone; there are other fruit-sellers in the street. I do not think about it when I work. I am just working. My best friends are among the Hindus. Through my work I have a close relationship with other people, particularly one with whom I work closely together. When we do business we help each other. When I was sick I gave my

fruits to her to sell. Later when I was well she gave me all the fruits back because we have a good relationship.⁴⁹²

Fruit-sellers get up early and come home late and she, as a wife and mother, has a lot of housework besides cleaning outside of the property and working the land. This way of living and her testimony (Section 4.1.4) signal a woman that knows about the challenges of life. She is clear when talking about friendships and, given her background, good friends are expected to be highly esteemed. The qualified values of this segment are evident: intimacy (working closely together), help and support, receiving, giving, and being reasonable (when paying back). These are soft values, some of which can be recognised directly from the table such as communication, presence and practical help. She says that her best friend is her working partner. It is debatable where in the range from -10 to +10 the qualified value should reside; however, the point is to demonstrate a genuine friendship from a cross-religious perspective, therefore, it should be along the top half of the positive part of the continuum which goes from +6 to +10. The middle value of this is +8.

6.4.1.2 Friends in Politics

Srijana Khadka was involved in Maoist activities prior to becoming Christian. She says about some friends of hers:

While I was in Nepal at that time I was a Maoist, I had a lot of Maoist literature. One day a policeman came and searched my village and the policeman killed some of my friends but by the grace of God I am saved. I thank God because he saved me. ... I pity for my friends ...⁴⁹³

⁴⁹² I-16/8

⁴⁹³ I-08/4,9

She does not say much about these friends; therefore, the assessment needs to be cautious. The data provide the information that she had and has friends. It says 'some of my friends' indicating there was a group of people in the village she counts as her friends as she says 'I pity for my friends,' implying those who are not Christian. She seems to be describing a group of her friends who were Maoists. This does not mean that all of her friends were Maoists, but some were. Given the nature of the Maoist movement the friendship with them would be expected to be strong because as Maoists in Nepal they had a vision, working and fighting together for their cause. Her group has travelled together, exchanged information, handed out literature, and been up against local authorities and the police force. The majority of Maoists have been in a prolonged confrontation with the police particularly during the years 1996-2006 (Section 3.1.3, p. 66). It seems obvious they had a strong fellowship and friendship. The killing of her Maoist friends must have shocked her. Today, she is pleased that she was not killed as she is on a one month bible training course in Darjeeling. In spite of her religious change of allegiance to Jesus Christ, her friendship with her Maoist friends is unbroken, and there is no reason to believe that her friendships with other non-Maoists were broken. She might still be a Maoist as people do not quickly change their political points of view. These general background considerations set the scene for the qualifier to be used on this tiny segment. Her Maoist life testifies to a particular character and way of acting with her friends. The qualifier Appreciated Values - Friendship applied to the data segment highlights values like bonding, cooperation, activity and aggression. When she says 'I pity' she discloses an affection and emotion towards her friends. To extract more from this would be speculative but this is sufficient to demonstrate her friendships from her pre-conversion time whether they are Maoist or not. A qualified value in the middle of the positive part of the continuum would be +6.

6.4.1.3 Drinking and Smoking Friends

Arjun is about average concerning his attitude and actual involvement with cross-religious people (6.2). The qualified assessment places him towards a more negative value when compared to some other informants. This means he is assessed as more passive in making friends than average. I know him also from participant observation and he has an attitude and an approach to non-Christians that is open, and I assess that he could have had many friends if they did not put him to the test. He says:

We can make friendships with the Hindus and the Buddhists. But sometimes they drink and smoke, and then it becomes difficult for me to mingle with them and uphold friendships because I am not drinking and smoking. Therefore we need to find out what kind of people we are dealing with ... I need to be careful what I am doing. For example I have to identify other Christians, and identify who I am. It can be a difficult situation at times.⁴⁹⁴

On the one hand, Arjun likes to link up with people cross-religiously and he wants to make friendships but, on the other hand, he has not yet negotiated key boundaries satisfactorily since the use of alcohol and tobacco is a continual challenge to him. He does not express many friendship values but his attitude is to be connective (mingle) and maintain or hold on to (uphold) friends. His attitude is to keep his friends and make new ones but he is hesitant and cautious (careful). Therefore to place him in the middle of the continuum seems appropriate; he is assessed with the qualified value '0'.

6.4.2 The Challenge of Cross-Religious Friendships

The attitude of this last informant, Arjun, (Section 6.4.1.3) is shared by other informants in facing the task of negotiating Christian stereotypes. Regarding student life, Shiva Kumari said, 'Most of the time I find it lonely as a Christian even at college or at

⁴⁹⁴ I-31/13

school. I try to find Christian friends but sometimes I am the only Christian in class.’⁴⁹⁵ She joins in with traditional religious people during leisure times so that she can be together with these her peers. However, the kind of pleasures that they enjoy are more allied with being traditional Nepali than being Christian and might include talking about Hindi movies, using alcohol and tobacco, occasionally skipping school and sometimes resorting to untruthful explanations, according to Shiva. She asserts that this makes her want to choose Christian company over that of traditional religious people, an assertion which Chandra Maya and Ganesh also make.⁴⁹⁶ Even so, she is building friendships, and she has formed good relationships.

The Christian markers are developed by Christians themselves rather than by traditional religious people. Many Christians succeed, in varying degrees, in negotiating different boundaries over time, as has been seen primarily in Chapter 5. The religious boundaries like prayer rituals (*puja*), marks on the forehead (*tika*), and offering sacrificed food (*prasad*) etc. (p. 148) are putting Christians to the test. Alcohol and tobacco are also challenging although slightly differently as these signal changes within the social rules (*sanskriti*) among almost all non-twice-born Christians, particularly the *Janajati* as they are expected to serve and consume alcohol.

Social rules are essential in social environments, and breaching these will generate questions and create confrontations as we have seen. Most Christian restrictions are self-imposed and follow classic stereotypes modified by individual principles.⁴⁹⁷ The

⁴⁹⁵ I-29/9

⁴⁹⁶ I-12/15; I-19/7; I-29/10

⁴⁹⁷ *Sanskriti*: Restrictions in the use of alcohol and tobacco, going to the cinema, gambling, card playing, dancing etc. Today most Christians have no restrictions in going to the cinema, card playing or dancing, but during the Panchayat days these were issues; some Panchayat Generation Christians still stick to these rules.

challenge for the Christians is that they seem to stand behind Christian markers or stereotypes. But except for alcohol and tobacco (see, though, Section 5.2.2, p. 192) many of these markers are able to be negotiated if they want a closer cross-religious friendship with the traditional religious people.⁴⁹⁷ In due time, Christians may learn to better navigate the complexities within that socio-religious domain of embracing cross-religious friendships, and even now the vast majority of informants who provided relevant material have cross-religious friendships. Indra Kumari says: ‘My best friends are among the Hindus,’⁴⁹⁸ and Gyanu Pokharel says: ‘My best friend is a Buddhist.’⁴⁹⁹

The change of government rule from Panchayat to Democracy also changed the attitude between the Panchayat and Democracy generations in relation to markers or stereotypes. There are tensions between the two generations but there is a mutual acceptance of each other’s Christian faith. In summary, the task of maintaining and sustaining cross-religious friendships and establishing new ones generally seems to be a task located with the Christians and not with the traditional religious people.

6.4.3 Comments on Basic Features of the Diagram

The diagram (Figure 14) is based on less data than the former diagram (Figure 13) because there is only one qualifier as opposed to nine. Therefore, the features of the diagram look rougher and more distinct. The mean value for all informants is +3. The vast majority of the informants (79%) who talk about friendships are placed on the right hand side (with positive values) indicating that they claim to have cross-religious friendships or at least that their attitude and approach to such a friendship is positive.

⁴⁹⁸ I-16/8

⁴⁹⁹ I-32/14

The diagram provides evidence of friendships between Christians and traditional Nepalis. It does not describe their quality or give reasons for such friendships.

The three examples above (Sections 6.4.1.1 - 6.4.1.3) were chosen to shed light on some of the processes used to assess the qualified values between -10 and +10. It is evident that informants do have friends but that these are not without challenges (Section 6.4.2) and, at times, frustrations. For some informants, they and their friends have much in common, like Indra Kumari and her business partner and Gyanu and her Buddhist friend, and their friendships are strong.

One person, Pastor Bhuban, has been given the negative value -5. This qualified mean value may have been assessed too low because it falls outside the rest of the qualified mean values.⁵⁰⁰ In the interview, he explains the pressure he is under from Christians to not associate too closely with the non-believers. Therefore, he concentrates on his pastoral work. It is his personal decision to submit to group pressure from the Christians but therefore the assessment moves into the negative side. However, it is a matter of debate whether that value should have been a bit higher. To me this does not matter much as my point has been to draw attention to the fact that he is the only one among the informants who does not want friends or does not want to mix too much with non-believers as a matter of principle because he values his pastoral work. Ganesh Lama's attitude to cross-religious relationship is on the negative side (Section 6.2.1.1); he does seem to have a few friends although there are issues around drinking, so he has been given -1.

⁵⁰⁰ I-25

6.5 Cross-Religious Relationships and Friendships – Correlation

The two diagrams (Figure 13 & Figure 14) have been laid out in comparable ways. This does not mean that, although the horizontal and vertical axes are identical, the two set plots can be directly compared but it does mean that, by transforming the diagrams into a new diagram, a possible correlation between the two can be identified. This diagram (Figure 15) is, therefore, created with new horizontal and vertical axes. All thirty-five informants are positioned along the horizontal axis and each informant's mean value is plotted along the vertical axis. Consequently, the vertical axis runs from -10 to +10 as these are the possible assessed qualified values. Comparing the two diagrams for any correlation between the two creates an additional challenge as one diagram (Figure 13, p. 230) contains information from thirty-five informants and the other diagram (Figure 14, p. 248) from only nineteen informants. For this to be meaningful, I only compare the nineteen informants appearing in both diagrams.

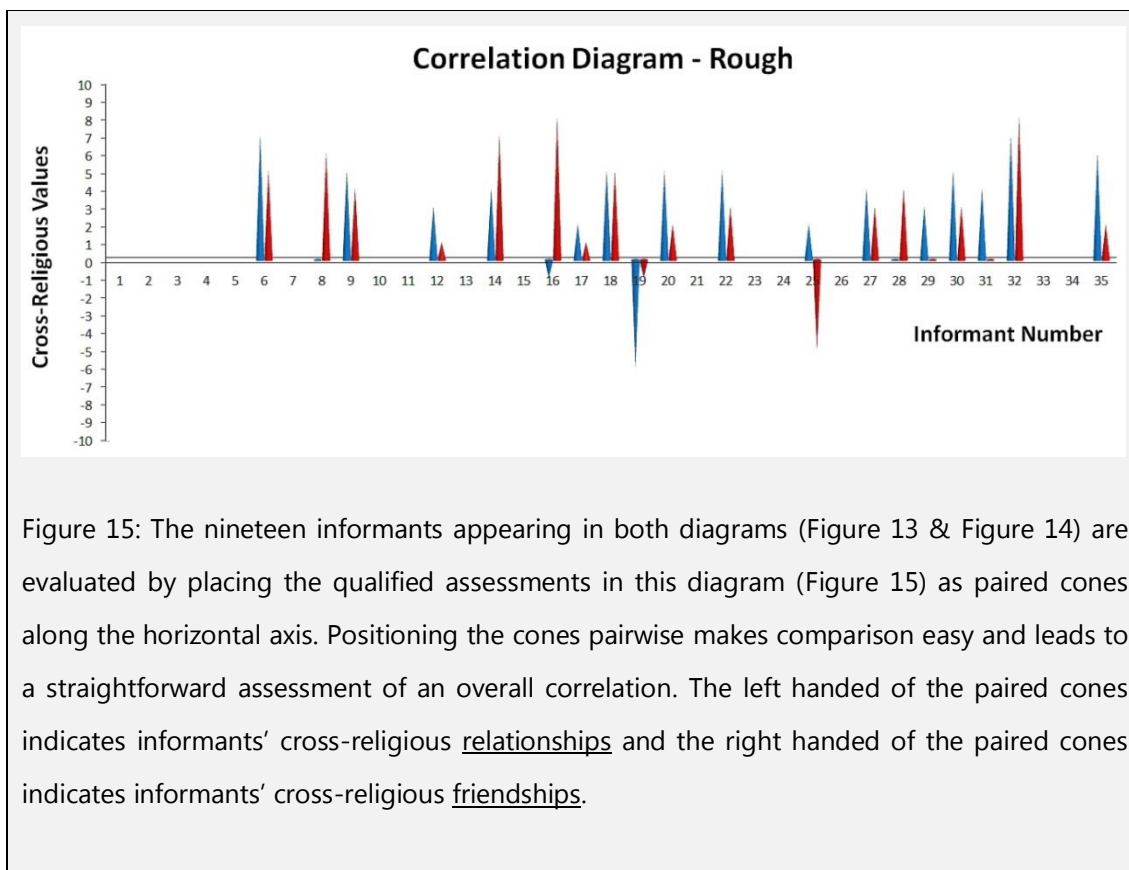


Figure 15: Correlation Diagram – Rough (All Nineteen Informants)

The blue cone (left handed of the paired cones) signifies informants' cross-religious relationships (obtained from Figure 13) and the red cone (right handed of the paired cones) signifies informants' cross-religious friendships (obtained from Figure 14). Apart from six informants (I-08, I-16, I-19, I-25, I-28 and I-31) who do not seem to have any relationship between the two analyses (Figure 15), the rest of the informants have common featured tendencies. Therefore, by taking out these six informants which corresponds to about one third of the nineteen informants, two-thirds of the nineteen informants are left and they appear correlated with respect to both their interest in cross-

religious relationships and by having genuine friendships.⁵⁰¹ The correlated data is extracted from Figure 15 and shown in Figure 16.

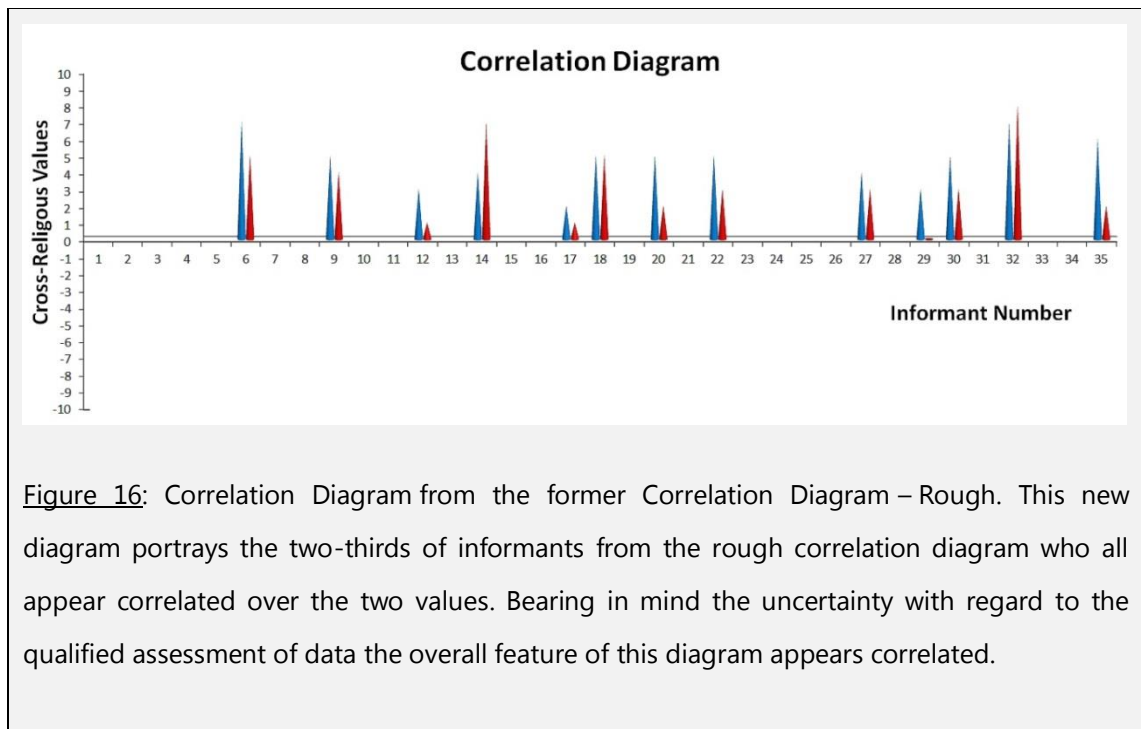


Figure 16: Correlation Diagram

Figure 16 is really interesting. The interpretation from this extracted or polished correlation indicates that pro-active Christians or Christians who have a welcoming attitude towards cross-religious people also have good opportunities to have friends among the traditional religious people, whether making new friends or retaining old friends from the pre-conversion time. Alternatively, it might indicate that those who already had genuine friends or who would like to have a friend among the traditional

⁵⁰¹ While assessing the informants in Figure 13 and Figure 14 there was an overlap of segments for informants 27 and 29. For details about data segment overlaps (paragraph overlap), compare Appendices F & G. However, the qualifiers and the purposes of the two researches were different; therefore it should interfere only minimally with the correlation of the data, but it is good to bear in mind for future reference

religious people develop a proactive attitude to mingling with the Nepali people. The diagram portrays a convincing degree of correlation but it does not specify cause and effect.

The reason why I judge this interesting is that genuine friendships appear to be dependent on the attitude of the Christian toward the traditional religious people, on a proactive approach, and is not a matter of religion. Religion is not a hindrance to cross-religious friendships. Obstacles across religions may create challenges but most boundaries to cross-religious friendships appear negotiable.

No correlation was detected for one-third ($n=6$) of the nineteen possible correlated informants. The data come from the two diagrams (Figure 13 & Figure 14) showing the informants' attitude to both cross-religious relationships and to friendships. The lack of correlation indicates either that their interviews do not reveal enough about their cross-religious relationships or friendships to show a credible association, or that there simply is no or little correlation. Pastor Bhuvan is an example of the problem that can occur, as he appears negatively (Section 6.4.3), but in the interview with him there are signals which in different ways could move him towards cross-religious relationships with traditional religious people but not sufficiently to claim friendships. Therefore, I will leave him with a low assessment and thereby the low correlation. Similarly, other informants may have lives that did not fully emerge in interviews. Generally, though, I am satisfied with the data, although aware that they are only data from single interviews.

This correlation diagram (Figure 16) can be compared to a triangulation method. The correlation diagram which demonstrates a high level of meaningful correlation between

two end-results also serves to give credence to the methods used in this chapter both regarding the development of qualifiers and the general assessments in using the qualifiers.

6.6 Conclusion

The research question: 'In what ways and to what extent have Christians of the Asha Church retained or changed their way of living after they have become Christians?' is closely addressed in this chapter with a focus on the construct of interaction. On the one hand, it is not beneficial for Christians to be marginalised or, even worse, isolated because Nepalis, as social people with strong family ties and many acquaintances, spend much time in their respective villages or in the local towns. Reliance on matters like caste meetings, village planning and mutual help during harvest time makes marginalisation more serious. Opportunities to propagate and embed Christian belief in the neighbourhood are naturally hindered if marginalised. On the other hand, when people convert from traditional Nepalese religions to Christianity there are bound to be changes of attitude, and there will be a development of a new Christian identity which will determine the way they negotiate their boundaries.

The degree of cross-religious relationships and friendships between Christians and traditional Nepalis was analysed to enable me to examine to what extent these interactions are significant for the Christians either with little socio-religious discontinuity or possibly through newly established associations, or whether relationships had changed radically. The result which is extracted shows that there are no simple answers because of the diversity of attitude and approach in the various socio-religious domains concerning analysis of both the cross-religious relationships and friendships. The qualified average values of the informants range from -6 to +7

(general cross-religious relationships) and from -5 to +8 (specific cross-religious friendships) on a scale ranging from -10 to +10. Consequently none of the diagrams has data that are clustered together on any of the axes but instead are scattered along a wide range of possible values. This means that Christian behaviour varies between Christians and they approach situations differently; a conclusion which was already made in a previous chapter and which was called the self-determination factor.

It is evident, though, that Christians of Asha Church (informants) do engage with the traditional religious people as opposed to remaining separated and staying among themselves in Christian groups or in other ways becoming isolated. More than two-thirds of the informants (71%) demonstrate interest, some even pro-actively, in finding ways to mingle cross-religiously. Obviously, there are informants who prefer Christian fellowship and look for this among people around them but they are a minority. It is also conclusive, given the material, that most Christians have cross-religious friendships since four-fifths of informants (79%) - of those who provided information about their friendships - made attempts to negotiate boundaries to establish new or to maintain existing friendships. Friendships are, meanwhile, not always without challenges or frustrations due to boundaries which, however, seem to be still negotiable.

A further analysis showed correlation between proactive cross-religious engagement and cross-religious friendships. The specific nature of the correlation requires further investigation. It is suggested that a proactive attitude will help establish new friendships or maintain old friendships; alternatively cross-religious friendships will, of themselves, encourage a proactive attitude, or it may work both ways. Additionally it seems conclusive that religion is not a hindrance to cross-religious friendships.

Informants' ways of articulating complex socio-religious notions and issues required a transformation of these data segments onto a common platform where data could be compared. Therefore parts of this chapter have been allocated to generating suitable qualifiers to transform qualitative data segments into integers to make diagramming easy. Qualifiers were generated, one set to work with cross-religious relationships and another to work with cross-religious friendships. The developments of the two sets of qualifiers proved to be more complex than expected but they were useful and indispensable.

The core category from this chapter, CROSS-RELIGIOUS RELATIONSHIPS AND FRIENDSHIPS, proved to be comprehensive and is regarded as a major factor in this thesis. It will be called the contact factor just as in Chapter 4 the crisis factor was identified and the self-determination factor emerged in Chapter 5. These three factors provide information to generate theory; this will be done in the next chapter (Chapter 7), and general information and conclusive results in the analysis chapters (Chapters 4, 5 and 6) is used alongside this.

CHAPTER 7

7. Christian Factors: Crisis, Self-determination and Contact

The purpose of this chapter is to focus on Christian attitude and behaviour and to theorise on correlations or causal constructions. This chapter draws on the qualitative data analysis (QDA) in Chapters 4-6 which gave fundamental insights into Nepalese Christianity. These three chapters provided three factors, or what Corbin terms abstract concepts: Crisis, Self-Determination and Contact. QDA encompasses description, conceptual ordering and theorising (Section 2.1). Theorising is not easy; it takes time to think over data and causal factors and to link together emerging socio-religious circumstances or opportunities and tensions. The three factors emerged over years of examining interview data concerning the relationships between Christians and the traditional religious people. Theorising is based on enquiring into the effects of these three factors.

The aim and focus of this is to extract information from informants at a deeper and an even more personal level than in the former three chapters. This development onto a deeper level is a valuable move into the life and identity of certain areas of Nepalese Christianity. Categories are the backbones of the chapters from where theorising is developed.

- Chapter 4: RELIGIOUS DYNAMICS BETWEEN TWO CULTURES (Figure 7)
- Chapter 5: FORMING CHRISTIAN IDENTITY (Figure 9) & NEPALESE CULTURE & TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS (Figure 10)
- Chapter 6: CROSS-RELIGIOUS RELATIONSHIPS AND FRIENDSHIPS (Figure 12)

‘Concepts alone do not make theory,’ as Corbin and Strauss say in remembering that categories are high-level concepts.⁵⁰² Therefore the emphasis will be on forming theories by examining the factors to see what possible effects they generate. Through examination of data from the perspective of the three factors (Crisis, Self-determination and Contact) it is possible to see what they generate, or what their effects are, to comprehend Nepalese Christianity in a wider and deeper way.

This chapter demonstrates the unlikelihood of Nepali Christians converting back to their original traditional way of living once they have converted through a crisis (Section 7.1), the self-determination from the negotiation chapter causes Christians to have a concern and a love for traditional religious people (Section 7.2), and contact in the cross-religious relationship and friendship chapter maintains and sustains important codices of the all-Nepalese cultural area of *sanskriti* (Section 7.3).

7.1 Crisis Prevents Re-Conversion

This sociological notion of crisis, which was first introduced in a fifty year old sociological article during research on a model of conversion, introduced a new emphasis to certain concepts of Nepalese conversion stories.⁵⁰³ Crisis, as an assembling idea of other notions like affliction, tension, and conflict, has great significance in the lives of many Christians and has been transformed into a factor because of its recognisability among informants and as a concept to explain why many remain as Christians. For example, pastor Tamang reports about his mother and father: ‘After the healing of my mother ... [pastor Tamang’s mother said to his father:] ‘No! I will not leave Jesus. If you force me, I will divorce you, I cannot forsake Jesus Christ’ ... Pastor

⁵⁰² Corbin, 2008, 103

⁵⁰³ Lofland, 1965

Tamang's father asked 'What was that inside? Something has been put into her mind. What is it?'⁵⁰⁴ His wife had completely recovered from her sickness and no longer had a reason to be Christian because the rest of the family and the entire village, almost the entire district of Nuwakot, was Buddhist. But she was determined; see also Tom Fricke's account from Timling where Christians during persecution said '[we] would rather die than leave our faith.'⁵⁰⁵ Pastor Tamang's mother had been through a crisis, been healed and did not want to return to Tamang Buddhism. Her experience through the crisis had given her a determination and an appreciation of her new life. She and many other Christians have converted through a crisis.

Single conversions, as opposed to group conversions, according to this material (Chapter 4) have shown that many (57% of informants) had a crisis prior to their conversion, but it is not possible to conclude from this that people who perceive their situation as being in a crisis convert or even have a predisposition to do so. It is simply, as Rambo says, 'that crisis provides an opportunity for a new option.'⁵⁰⁶ Lofland and Stark write that no one entirely lacks a conception of tension, deprivation or any kind of physical, mental or spiritual challenge. They clarify that 'tension is best characterised as a felt discrepancy between some imaginary, ideal state of affairs and the circumstances in which [they see] themselves caught up.'⁵⁰⁷ More than half of the informants mentioned voluntarily a crisis in their conversion story which predisposed to conversion. The specific words and phrases to describe such crises are tabulated in alphabetical order (Table 25, left column). Common phrases like sickness and demon

⁵⁰⁴ I-02/7; The context of this quotation from the interview data segment is given on p. 113

⁵⁰⁵ Fricke, 2008, 37, 40; 'Timling lies on the slopes of Ganesh Himal, called Lobsang Gyarpö by its people, at the headwaters of the Ankhu Khola in northern Dhading district.'

⁵⁰⁶ Rambo, 1993, 166

⁵⁰⁷ Lofland, 1965, 864

possession are included only once. Some words are close in meaning and almost synonymous, but included anyway to create distinctions and provide dynamics in understanding. My response to arguments as to whether these ‘crises’ gave rise to predispositions for conversion is that they were brought forward by informants as part of their conversion stories. I feel privileged to have been entrusted with this material from informants. Devi Bahadur reported about his life prior to his conversion:

When I was studying in class 8 I stopped going to school, my mind was disturbed. I changed school quite a lot, sometimes because of persecution ... At grade 10 I had been at 10 different schools. I was depressed in my teenage years, when I was in class 8 I wandered around having no peace in heart only having this ambition of becoming a rich man, in one sense I was depressed, frustrated over life because of poverty. We did not have enough food... I wandered around to Narayanghat, Butwal having no peace in heart.⁵⁰⁸

In another part of the interview, he explains about his and his mother’s sicknesses. He was deeply troubled and depressed. Although his family had converted, it never became real to him until he enrolled in one month’s bible training where the faith came alive to him, and he made a total conversion. Gyanu Pokharel tells about her time prior to Christianity:

When we were in Buddhism we were struggling to live a normal life, we did not always have peace in our family; father and mother were quarrelling when we were in Buddhism. After we accepted Jesus Christ in our family we got peace.⁵⁰⁹

This data segment reveals one reason for considering conversion. A close family shared the Christian belief with Gyanu and her family, and they believed. Gyanu was happy as the family moved to another district where she had the opportunity to study. In

⁵⁰⁸ I-04/11

⁵⁰⁹ I-32/5

remembering, she perceives that as part of God's blessing. Informants were open in sharing about their lives and mentioning that a crisis was prior to their conversion. There is a fundamental difference in their life situation before conversion compared with after. This is not to say that life was easy as a Christian as many Nepalis have experienced difficult times including persecution (Table 25, right column).⁵¹⁰

The drama of many conversion stories, particularly in relation to broken family ties, will sustain many of the converted to remain Christians. This change of direction encompasses other socio-religious issues like new friendships, solutions to crises, an entire new life with a new hope, worldview and perspective and some new skills. Values like peace, love, and joy become precious to them, contributing to their contentment as Christians. This is not to suggest that ordinary Nepalis do not either possess these values or want them, but it signals that a great deal of the Asha Church people (57% of the informants) had crises prior to their conversion but after their conversion they enjoy their new lives. These informants had crises, more may have done so but did not explicitly express that and I did not enquire further. However, I am familiar with information about another three informants who had crises not mentioned here giving a minimum of 66% with crises prior to conversion.

⁵¹⁰ The right side column of Table 25 describes the words and short phrases the informants applied to themselves after their changed allegiance to Jesus Christ. There is no correlation between the two columns in this table, they are sorted alphabetically, but in Appendix H the columns relate to each other as they are ordered according to data paragraphs

Crisis Emotional States, Values and Experience Before and After Conversion

Before Conversion	After Conversion
Aimless	Able to read
Death of children	Blessed
Demon-possession	Burdens
Depression	Cursed & protected
Desperate situation	Death of father
Disturbed	Desperate situation
Drink	Encouragement
Escape	Father in ministry
Fear	Given a lot
Fear of persecution	Hard place
Frustration	Healing
Lack of peace	Healing of animal
Lack of peace in heart	Help
Tantra-mantra (bombo)	Help in church
Mental problems	Helping people
No hope	Hope
Persecution	Joy
Poverty	Love
Problems from Satan	Ministry
Production of alcohol	No problems
Quarrelling	Peace
Respect of old people	Persecution
Scared of father	Respect of old people
Sickness	Thankful
Struggle/beat	Touched in heart
Youth problems	

Table 25: People's descriptions through Crises (Alphabetical Order)

Some informants (23%) conveyed perceptions along the lines of Sukuman who said, 'I love Buddhist people, because after I received Jesus Christ I have a peace and a joy in my heart.'⁵¹¹ What is not clear from Table 25 is the context associated with each description. Sangita Lama experienced encouragement; therefore, this word is tabulated. She said:

I was doing ministry, I am there for my children and family, I have a burden for my family. There was a time when my family became a hard place; my brother and mother were demon possessed. Seeing that

⁵¹¹ I-14/7

I felt that it was a very desperate situation, why is God doing this to me, and I do not even have my father anymore. I just have to carry all the burdens of my family. But God showed me one thing; he gave me one bible verse, Is.48:10. God put me in this situation to put me to the test. After I read this verse God encouraged me a lot. I prayed for my demon possessed mother and God gave me victory, and she was freed from the evil spirits.⁵¹²

I offer this data segment to demonstrate that the lives of Christians are not necessarily easy and many Christians have burdens to carry. In the light of their new life perspective that includes a prayer life which is a two-way communication, according to Sangita, in that she maintains she got an explanation of her situation. This new approach to life is treasured and forms Christian identity. We are not only drawn into emotional states as Sangita expresses here in her distress and her joy over the victory, but some also offer a cognitive meaning such as Devi who said: 'But we are proud, we do not regret since we know that we have made the right choices.'⁵¹³

7.1.1 Group Conversion

I did not include group conversion because models of group conversion are different and because conversions in Nepal are usually individual. Data validation and verification of information in such situations is difficult, but is more reliable when people talk about their own conversion or the conversion of a close family member. There are three interview reports about group conversions. One is from the Dhading district, again from Devi:

In 1990 Democracy was restored in Nepal and the church grew quickly in those early days. I still remember 216 families coming to the Lord on a single night in Dhading district. Ps Shakti Bahadur,

⁵¹² I-24/11; Bible: Isaiah 48:10 Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction.

⁵¹³ I-04/12

myself and another brother, Bishal from Gorkha we went to Dhading, one village of Amar Tamang, a former minister, the entire village came to the Lord in one day. It is a very big village. People were under bondage and fear in those days.⁵¹⁴

It is interesting that Devi says that people were under ‘bondage and fear’ as if they were in a crisis because this could be seen as a contributing factor for conversions. But his perception of the situation may be superficial and the generalised evaluation that all individuals in the entire village should have been in a crisis is not convincing. Group conversion is beyond the scope of this thesis even though there are two other accounts that relate to group conversion from Nuwakot and Gorkha. Only rarely are people converted in groups like the Kayan people in Borneo, where the local chief or headman set up conversion meetings, or in India where there are many accounts of group conversions, as reported by Donald McGavran.⁵¹⁵ Recently six hundred beggars became Christians in India because one leading beggar allegedly was healed through prayer.⁵¹⁶

⁵¹⁴ I-04/23

⁵¹⁵ Tan, 2011, 132; McGavran, 1990, 340; Pickett, 1933, 320

⁵¹⁶ Personal correspondence with M Tamang 29 Mar 2015 who writes: ‘This is a reality about Kanjar community. They are minority group scattered all over India in small villages. Normally, this community lives by begging and hunting wild pigs and working on stones. This community is identified as a beggar community. They are out of government laws. They have their chief and a group of people who takes decision on every single issue that occurs. It could be stealing, divorce, killing etc. This particular village where this conversion happened is four hours’ drive from the main city, Varanasi, India (UP). Ps. Ravi's big brother was sick for long time. He was like a mad man. They sacrificed pigs and wine to their ancestor gods to please them, but nothing happened. One day a pastor from the AG Church came and prayed for him and he was healed. The whole village was witness to his madness and now entire community has seen the power of healing. Because they cannot deny the power of the name of Jesus the whole village believed in Jesus at once. Furthermore, they all decided to throw all their gods and belongings and follow Jesus. We met that guy who was sick/mad in his right mind. He even prepared food for us. Now his brother Ravi is pastoring three groups among those 600 people. Ravi's brother helps him all he can. Other Kanjar communities have heard about this event so they are inviting ps. Ravi to share about Jesus. Before we left Varanasi ps. Ravi was sharing with us that another Kanjar community has been calling him to share the gospel and that community's main occupation is to do snake show. This is what I can write about this mass conversion.’

7.1.2 Summary of the Crisis Factor

The crisis factor does not include the post-converted socio-religious worldview and life perspective. After this analysis (Table 25) I came to the conclusion that a pre-conversion state of mind requires a post-conversion state of mind to portray the consequences or effects of conversion through crisis. Even though informants in their conversion stories often introduced their stories with severe tensions and problems somehow they had a good ending (see also Peter L. Berger and Lofland & Stark).⁵¹⁷ One of the most significant outcomes of this analysis from the perspective of the crisis factor is that it is difficult to imagine that they should re-convert. Surya Tamang says, ‘I received my Jesus when I was in a desperate situation, therefore I will not leave my Jesus and deny him.’⁵¹⁸ This reminds one of Pastor Tamang’s mother’s story. They have overcome serious problems and they seem genuine in their holding on to Christianity.

7.2 Self-Determination Produces Concern and Love

Nepali Christians have demonstrated individuality and self-determination in negotiating personal boundaries. Although corporate socio-religious decisions concerning acceptable and unacceptable Christian issues may be well-known, the independence to act individually even within the same church is notable on some issues. This proactive attitude to make one’s own decisions is called self-determination in this thesis and represents a factor.

Retrospectively, I realise that this factor has been in my mind all the time, although it was only identified when I wrote Chapter 5. This is one of the most impressive assets of

⁵¹⁷ Berger, 1963, 1-24; Lofland, 1965, 863; Peter Berger noticed, from sociological perspectives, that the excitement of any discovery undertaken with passion sometimes gives a genuine transformation of consciousness

⁵¹⁸ I-09/12

the Nepalese Christian character. Self-determination is not a word sympathetic to governmental issues but it is a reflection of the Nepali hard-working survival culture along with its related decision-making transferred into personal church and life decisions. To use the term survival culture may seem exaggerated but insight into Nepalese village life makes such a statement axiomatic. Rural Nepali people generally work hard, and there are many decisions which have to be made without any social security or governmental help to meet difficult situations and problems.

Obviously, corporate church decisions like abstention of rituals in the cultural area of *sanskar* (*tika, puja, prasad, sindoor, kiriya* etc., p. 170) and abstention from intoxicants are important and every church member is usually in agreement with each other, particularly with the leadership. A pastor usually has a strong say in the church. Binod in a short follow-up fieldwork said:

I talked to the youth leaders with the concern [to make] them passionate for Jesus the rest of fifty-one weeks in a year. Over 95% of the youth leaders told me that ‘I am a youth leader not because I have gone through any training but simply because my pastor told me that from this day onwards you are going to be a youth leader.’ It was then the vision got birthed into my heart.⁵¹⁹

This quote is evidence of an inherent respect for the pastor. A pastor may urge people to either stay away from or participate in the yearly Hindu festival *Dashain* but people may make their own decisions in spite of their respect. Some stay at home, either because they not like to go, or they go simply because they like to go or take *Dashain* as an opportunity to talk about their belief. Strong Christian markers, as outlined earlier (Chapter 5), are negotiated, some to the absolute limit. The most impressive example in

⁵¹⁹ I-30/follow-up (YM program)

the interviews is the account by Pastor Gurung about a Gurung funeral ceremony (Table 26).

Funeral Ceremony
<p><i>Can you relate to the Gurung people? ... Three weeks ago my uncle died. Many people in Nepal believe that Christians cannot touch dead bodies; also they do not allow us to touch their bodies because they would say that it would be an unclean act. However, during that time I went there, I really talked with them and I touched the dead body of my third uncle. I took off the clothes of him and put on the new clothes on him and carried him to the bamboo carrier. First, me and his son carried the dead body, first to the river bank. I did not do the religious part of it. Everybody has to give mud for the dead body; I did not have any problems with that. Yesterday my mother said that my auntie said I did not visit her, therefore she was discouraged. I did a lot of things for my dead uncle, and yesterday I went to my auntie, and she was very happy. I praised God because in Nepal normally you do not touch dead bodies across the religions. Nonetheless I went to their culture, deeply into their custom and did many things which were pleasing to them.</i></p>

Table 26: Funeral Ceremony ⁵²⁰

From other observations, I have noticed that detailed information about death is sparse in Nepali churches. This is strange as, first of all, the infant mortality is high because of many fatal accidents and sicknesses which are widespread all over Nepal.⁵²¹ Second, many come from a traditional background where special people are set aside for the act of handling dead people - they are the outcastes. Traditional people usually cremate the dead but Christians bury people locally often in hill areas which, depending on the type of soil, can be impractical as digging in stony or rocky ground is not possible. Handling dead bodies within the church is not left to the Hindus or the *lamas* as is normal practice

⁵²⁰ I-35/11

⁵²¹ Sharma, 2013, 60-67; See Bal Krishna Sharma's discussion pp. 60-67, particularly p. 61 which relates to Binod's attitude

but usually to the families for whom it can be quite a burden, particularly if there are diverse allegiances in a family, or the family is a small or weak Christian family. Third, in Nepal the ending of a life is often a more significant period of time than the beginning of a life. A birth is a joyful happening but death is a serious event which has to be undertaken in the right way; it is the transition from this life to the next life according to belief and tradition. Fourth, only on rare occasions are there serious attempts to offer a church-related and theological explanation and information to help integration into a local or Nepalese context that includes care-taking and the burial of dead bodies. See, though, Sharma's discussion on the issue where he argues for a traditional ritualistic way of performing Christian funerals as this could be an opportunity for biblical teaching on the subject, and a mourning period for the bereaved and a time of ministering to the bereaved.⁵²²

Pastor Gurung is informed about all the above issues; even so he crosses all barriers to join in this ceremonial funeral event. He says that many people, meaning both Christians and traditional religious people, have preconceived ideas about Christianity and they do not allow Christians to interfere during their ceremonial time and time of mourning. Nevertheless, Pastor Gurung went, touched the dead body, took off the clothes, put on new clothes, carried him together with the son of the dead to the river, then comforted the aunt, and did many other things pleasing to them. Normally this is not possible but the way to approach a sensitive situation and the manner of helping can bring about an atmosphere of trust and comfort which may create the confidence necessary to cross over barriers. One reason he succeeds is that he wants to help, and

⁵²² Sharma, 2013, 175

because he loves his family. Pastor Gurung says about the Newars in response to the question: *Can you get on with other cultures?*

If a Newar dies there is no way I can touch a dead body as a Gurung, Christian or non-Christian. I can carry some wood and do some other stuff but I cannot even talk with a close relative to the dead person. This is not because of me, but because of the Newars. As far as I am concerned there would be no problem, but there would be a problem for the Newars. Not even the Brahmins can touch, only the Newars themselves.⁵²³

Not all barriers are able to be crossed, at least not according to Pastor Gurung. This situation requires other connections. Demonstrating his ability to assess situations he says about dressing:

Dressing is not a problem but those who do not cover their body properly create problems. I talk about the women. They have to cover properly in the church and outside the church. My focus is that wherever you go you are a testimony. If you dress nicely in the church but outside the church you are not dressed properly people will think that Christians are hypocritical.⁵²⁴

Pastor Gurung also explains that Christians in his church do not adapt to any particular caste culture - low-caste, Gurung or Magar - even though these make up the majority of the caste cultures both in the church and in the local area, but he teaches:

We are on this earth, and we have to live with our neighbours, and we have to have a good relationship with our neighbours. Good friends, good neighbours, however, when Christians think that now I am a Christian therefore I should not relate to non-believers, then the problems appear.⁵²⁵

In his teaching he guides people to focus on their social context. The funeral data segment above, describing a Christian's attitude and help, is a successful outcome of a

⁵²³ I-35/12

⁵²⁴ I-35/21

⁵²⁵ I-35/19

self-determined individual who crossed all barriers during part of the important Gurung death ritual (*arghoun*, Table 26). Although not every Christian would do as Pastor Gurung did in relation to the funeral ceremony, it is my assessment that the vast majority in the church and presumably the entire Asha Church embraces what he has done. Therefore, regarding this pastor and his approach, his reviewing of the possible reaction from the Newars, his thoughts about avoiding hypocrisy along with his embracing attitude towards people in general, sustain the assessment that his approach to people at the funeral was a genuine and loving act. He also went to another village to perform strategic prayer (Section 4.1.5) and negotiated his boundaries regarding *bhaitika* (Section 5.2.1.2). He treads the narrow line between the Christian comfort-zone which is the church among Christians and crossing barriers towards people he wants to help and get to know to demonstrate the love of God. This proactive self-determined attitude is tied up with an approach to living actively as a Christian. Although this attitude may appear particularly strong it is not unusual among Nepali Christians. I have noticed, even across many peoples and churches, that Christians are active in analogous ways. Gyanu Pokharel says:

It is my prayer they also will experience peace, they need to accept Christ also. The Buddhists in our family need help, and I need to visit them when they are sick. And if I get the chance to share the word of God with them then I will do that; the Buddhist people they are always sick, I tell them that they should believe in Jesus. At our wedding there was one lady who accepted Jesus Christ, she was in Gorkha. I shared that if you believe in Jesus Christ you will not be sick, and not be possessed by any demons, this is what I said, and she accepted Christ. I like to lead people to Christ.⁵²⁶

⁵²⁶ I-32/7

Gyanu is open and direct in her approach to people, and is evangelistic in talking about the necessity to believe in Jesus Christ. It is the same proactive self-determined attitude driving her as we saw with Pastor Gurung. Can people be too active? Binod reports an event he experienced:

There was a pastor, a radical pastor, there is a culture in the church, a Christian practice in the church, a marriage ceremony, and all the family came to church. The pastor said I am just going to do something new, something Nepali. Outside the church he made things exactly as if it was a Hindu marriage, the only difference was that the Hindu priest would read Hindu texts, and the pastor would read the bible. This was the only difference, there was no difference. I would say he could be good in his own logic and philosophy, but it brought about some negative influence. People would say it is the same thing, being a Hindu, being a Christian. And this pastor he was doing *mantras*, and many were confused, the Christians were confused, I was confused. It was too close.⁵²⁷

According to Binod, this kind of experimentally embedding the Christian belief system into a Hindu ceremonial context of this dimension brought confusion among both the Hindus and Christians. The informant, who otherwise gladly takes up opportunities to cross barriers and negotiates boundaries, portrays this overall situation as negative. Apparently this kind of adaptation to a non-Christian ceremony can be too close. In Hiebert's adapted model it corresponds to one of the bottom suggestions under UNCRITICAL ACCEPTANCE OF THE OLD TRADITIONS which is called Assimilation of Weaker Elements by Dominant Traditions which eventually leads to syncretism between the Old Traditions and Christianity (Figure 3, p. 36). The informant, though, understands the rationale behind this particular event or happening which is good but he cannot endorse it. Many Christians would in the same way regard this as unacceptable, not because negotiating boundaries during a ceremonial ritual is not acceptable, but

⁵²⁷ I-30/12

because the boundaries do not appear to be seriously negotiated, as everybody believed it was a traditional Hindu wedding and consequently became confused. Those who married were Christians but it all appeared Hindu. Self-determination for its own sake has no purpose and needs to be meaningful in its context. This aspect of self-determination which brings confusion and unrest to people exists. From participant observation, I have indications that it can lead to church splits. The self-determination factor is not just by definition a good thing even though it was defined as having an explanatory power. It must be seen and assessed in its context and have a recognised purpose.

From the interviews, a variety of proactive self-determined attitudes can be found, as in some examples from earlier chapters:

- Pabitra Kumal spends considerable time visiting people and praying for them (Section 4.1.1)
- Sunita Maya tries to establish good relationships with her relatives (Section 4.1.2)
- Bhim Bahadur worked as a missionary among the Tharus; it is assumed that he was exposed to a range of difficult negotiations (Section 5.2.1.1)
- Srijana Khadka right after her conversion took two years of bible training and returned to Gorkha to help with establishing a local church (Section 5.2.1.2)

Analogously, on a daily basis, there is a curiosity and a wish to get involved, or offer help if needed. People or animals are ill and they need injections and sick people need help to come to a clinic and often Christians help, according to informants. The self-determination factor has been identified among Christians. The question is whether this is linked with Christianity only or whether this is a mentality found in the Nepalese character as a general culture characteristic in which case this would not be specific for Christians.

7.2.1 The Mentality of the Nepalis

Since the Anglo-Nepali war (1814-1816), Nepalis have increasingly been migrant workers first and foremost in India and Britain but today they are found practically all over the world as hard working people who save money to get established in Nepal while many also try to settle overseas for good. Their strong social skills and willingness to migrate for a period of years, often separated from family, and to work hard are two characteristics found among the Nepali people which, I believe, support the national characteristic of self-determination among the Nepalis in general and the self-determination factor among the Christians in particular.

7.2.2 Conversion to Christianity

Two emphases are identified concerning the Christian people of the Asha Church: First, within Christianity there is inherently an encouragement to pay attention to other people, not only to one's friends. Second, the teaching of the Asha Church challenges the members to go and meet people. We remember Pastor Gurung's teaching to believers concerning keeping a good relation to non-believers (p. 275). These two emphases have over the years caused different youth programmes to reach Nepal and others have developed inside Nepal. One of the most popular is YWAM (Youth with a Mission) as this is the biggest evangelical mission organisation in the world with over 18,000 staff volunteers but there are other really popular programmes in Nepal. Asha Church has its own, called AY (Asha Youth), a two months' inter-semester/holiday programme situated in Gorkha Asha Church.⁵²⁸ Another programme is YM (Youth Mission) which is directed by one of the informants.⁵²⁹ Two other popular youth

⁵²⁸ Asha Youth is a pseudonym of the youth programme

⁵²⁹ Youth Mission is a pseudonym, but some of their aims and guidelines are these (personal notes): 'YM's main vision is to see an effective Youth ministry in every local church to reach out to more

organisations are Nepal Campus Crusade for Christ situated in west Bengal and Operation Mobilisation situated in Kathmandu. A considerable number of the young people of the Asha Church participate in one or more of these programmes. They can last from a few months to several years. They learn to live as a Christian, to talk about Jesus Christ, and to find their personal ministries and raise support. Additionally, there are programmes for adults either within the church or in different bible training centres, but they vary in Nepal. In Asha Church, there are opportunities to learn but family and financial responsibilities may impose limitations. Whether the mentality of self-determination is linked up with conversion in general is not clear but, from a wider panoramic view of the church, the impression is that the mentality of self-determination gets an extra boost from the various programmes in the church, particularly from the younger members of the Democratic generation as most, if not all of them, are encouraged to participate in youth programmes.

7.2.3 Historical and other Perspectives

The self-determination factor is an ideal concept for Christians to get involved with people. Informants have demonstrated a self-determined attitude through various proactive initiatives to enable them to get involved with other people, an initiative that is not systemic or guided by the church, even though the church may engender and inspire proactive living, but is relational and personal. The same spirit was at large during the Gorkha Mission days and the following decade into the late 1930s. Udi Gurung reports (Section 3.3.1, p. 74):

youth for Christ. The end vision is to see many youth come to the LORD ... to ignite the passion of the youth leaders ... with the purpose to create a missional move among the youth in Nepal. ... *to see every youth carrying the passion of mission to see God's kingdom come and to work for this whether they are in the church-based ministries or in the market places.* ' (original emphasis)

Nautanwa was the busiest entry post for the Gurkha soldiers going to their services and coming back to their homes. And Gorakhpur was the pension depot for the Gurkha soldiers. And other many Nepalese would come to Nautanwa for shopping or jobs. This was a suitable place for the evangelists to preach the gospel. NEB evangelists were so much busy preaching the gospel in Nautanwa. Premi Gurung said that she would immediately leave the boiling rice in the kitchen when she saw a Nepali appearing to her sight and would preach the gospel. All the Nepali evangelists would do the same. Their first and total priority was to preach the gospel to the Nepalese.⁵³⁰

Self-determination is not a new characteristic of Christian behaviour but is part of their spiritual heritage. Although the Panchayat generation Christians have demonstrated greater perseverance than the Democratic Christians, there is no reason to believe there is any difference in the importance of self-determination between the two generations. It seems to be an inherent characteristic of Christians. Informants report mostly positive, though also critical, stories about themselves and other Christians reflecting a Christian people who are self-determined with the consequence of establishing better relations with traditional religious people. Therefore, because Christians (informants) have learned to pray for and to be observant towards traditional religious people and by negotiating their boundaries sensitively and perseveringly (Chapter 5), the most significant effect of the self-determination factor is a cross-religious form of care and concern.

7.2.4 Summary of the Self-Determination Factor

The self-determination factor only occasionally translates into erroneous and deceptive authoritarian decisions. Most Nepalis, being social people, prefer corporate decisions, particularly from pastors and leaders at their weekly or bi-weekly meetings where new activities and other items are discussed. They may discuss for a long time; they prefer

⁵³⁰ Gurung, 2008

the consensus of the social group. Consensus and self-determination are not in opposition. Nepali Christians have many initiatives and ideas for approaching other people and engaging in society, and want to be moving forward most of the time, but they also want to discuss matters before they launch into business. Their social skills and willingness to migrate, the boost from different church programmes and their historical tradition of being pro-active contribute to sustain and maintain the self-determination factor.

7.3 Contact Sustains the Codices of Sanskriti

One GTA category in the code system, CROSS-RELIGIOUS RELATIONSHIPS AND FRIENDSHIPS (Figure 12), has established itself as a factor, according to Juliet Corbin, because it is far-reaching and relates to large portions of the interview data.⁵³¹ The name of the factor is contact, as in Chapter 6. This factor is recognised in other chapters as well because of the wide-ranging relations informants have established with other people. There is a Christian initiative to communicate and have cross-religious interaction as we have seen; contact is a socio-religious factor.

The reason for regarding contact as a factor is its centrality in Christian culture and its significance with respect to the research question. I spent time thinking about the possible effects of the contact factor: that is, what are the corollaries of the fact that Christians have cross-religious relationships and friendships? To claim contact as a factor has in itself no value, but insofar as its effects can be demonstrated theory can be built based on its causal effects or deduced constructions. Since the first and most comprehensive part of the analysis of the category data was performed using nine

⁵³¹ Corbin, 2008, 104-105, 266; factor: Corbin calls it a phenomenon

qualifiers scrutinising the core category CROSS-RELIGIOUS RELATIONSHIPS AND FRIENDSHIPS (contact factor), using the qualifiers in a different way may be helpful. The table of Description of Qualifiers (Table 27, from p.225) shows the devised qualifiers; they can roughly be systematised into three classes. Class-1: Q1 concerns a conversion class - group conversions as opposed to single conversions - which is linked with the sociological notion of crisis. Q6 and Q9 have inherent active elements and, by putting these two qualifiers into a self-determination class, Class-2 is formed. The remaining six qualifiers (Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q7 and Q8) all comprise elements relating to cultural boundaries within the area of *sanskriti*, they form Class-3. Even Q8 which concerns participating in the cultural area of *sanskara*, meaning traditional religious practices, rites and rituals (Section 3.5.1, p. 109), relates to *sanskriti* on the *sanskriti-sanskara* continuum (Figure 11). In this thesis the Nepalese culture consists of these two sub-cultures.

The first and second classes, Class-1 and Class-2, have already been examined under other circumstances in earlier sections (Sections 7.1 & 7.2). Therefore, there is no reason to include these classes in this examination. Table 27 demonstrates, tabulated on the right column, that Class-3 encompasses six different qualifiers useful for studying data segments, all of which focus on the all-Nepalese cultural canopy (*sanskriti*), although from different perspectives. The qualifiers which were devised to analyse cross-religious relationships used data segments from the category CROSS-RELIGIOUS RELATIONSHIPS AND FRIENDSHIPS. From Chapters 5 & 6 it became clear that Christians have cross-religious relationships and friendships and that they negotiate their boundaries as well as their individual consciences dictate. Generally, the all-Nepalese cultural covering (*sanskriti*) locates Christians in good positions because they not only associate cross-religiously with traditional Nepalīs but also associate in a Nepalese way.

This last claim is the one I would like to focus on. The core category CROSS-RELIGIOUS RELATIONSHIPS AND FRIENDSHIPS was used to generate the qualifiers. The effects of the selected qualifiers will be deployed under the core category FORMING CHRISTIAN IDENTITY. This choice is significant because it includes the way Christian identity forms - from the perspective of *sanskriti* - and therefore the attitude to *sanskriti* as part of Christian identity. The high-level concept Being a Christian Nepali in a Predominantly Hindu Culture contains the majority of the data segments for this. The box which concerns this particular high-level concept is darkened (Figure 17). In the following, data segments from this concept will be scrutinised using Class-3 qualifiers (Table 27) to see their effects. Other categories have other foci and relate less to *sanskriti*. In theory any category or high-level concept could be selected but this category contains the forming of identity, and therefore the forming of attitude and approach to Nepalis and the Nepalese society is specifically clarified.

Description of Qualifiers & Selected Qualifiers (Class-3 Qualifiers)		
The six qualifiers (Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q7 and Q8) have been selected to form Class-3 qualifiers, or <i>Sanskriti</i> qualifiers, which encompass elements relating to the cultural boundaries within the cultural area of <i>Sanskriti</i>		
	Qualifiers (Same Information as Table 14)	Qualifiers (Selected Qs for Class-3 – <i>Sanskriti</i>)
Q1	Multi-individual conversions (for example in villages)	
Q2	Sense of integration vs. loneliness among peers	Sense of integration vs. loneliness among peers
Q3	Stimulation of local culture	Stimulation of local culture
Q4	Ability and skill to negotiate personal Christian boundaries, for example on <i>bhai-tika</i> and <i>Dashain</i> but also challenges on a daily basis	Ability and skill to negotiate personal Christian boundaries, for example on <i>bhai-tika</i> and <i>Dashain</i> but also challenges on a daily basis
Q5	Maintaining local identities or self-respect	Maintaining local identities or self-respect
Q6	Pro-active involvement in own community or love for local people	
Q7	Participating in cultural songs/rhythms/dances/local food (<i>sanskriti</i>)	Participating in cultural songs/rhythms/dances/local food (<i>sanskriti</i>)
Q8	Participating in cultural ceremonies (wedding, funeral, festivals etc., <i>sanskar</i>)	Participating in cultural ceremonies (wedding, funeral, festivals etc., <i>sanskar</i>)
Q9	Social networking and friends among local people and good family relations	

Table 27: Description of Qualifiers & Selected Qualifiers

Inherently, *sanskriti* has a number of different codices in the Nepalese lifestyle. There are dress codes, folk music codes, and marriage codes that all vary between castes. The main thesis is that the Nepali church has managed to be first and foremost Nepali by having natural links to Nepalese culture (Section 1.3, p. 6); consequently the better the Christians adapt or integrate with the different *sanskriti* codices without compromising their belief system, the better they sustain their Nepali-ness as Christians. This premise will not be proved as it is axiomatic; obviously Christians have limitations in that the cultural area of *sanskar* is an unacceptable cultural area for the Christians, but see the findings and discussion on the self-determination factor in Chapter 5 (Section 5.4, p. 209).

The outcome based on the core category FORMING CHRISTIAN IDENTITY, particularly the concept Being a Christian Nepali in a Predominantly Hindu Culture (Figure 17), majors on three topics (Table 28); these will make the point that the effect of the contact factor facilitates the process of sustaining and maintaining Christian Nepalis within *sanskriti*.

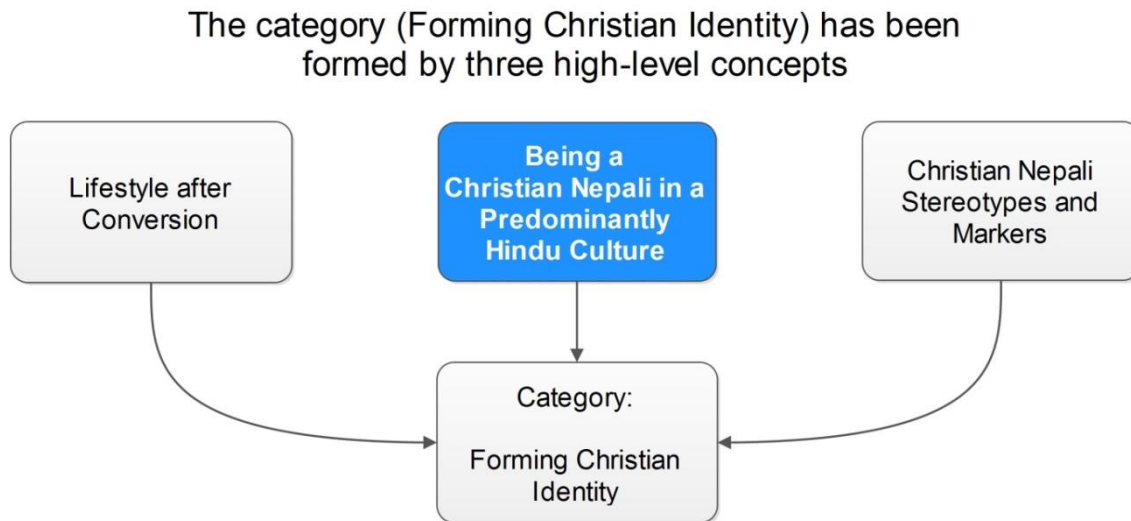


Figure 17: Grounded Theory: Being a Christian Nepali in a Predominantly Hindu Culture

Most of the informants affirm the enabling effect of these three topics but informants articulate the way they perceive these cultural topics differently. The specific GTA high-level concept Being a Christian Nepali in a Predominantly Hindu Culture under the category FORMING CHRISTIAN IDENTITY (Figure 17, from p. 166) provided this information (Appendix J). The three topics are elaborated on in the following three sections below.

I-Num	Start Position	End Position	Topic 1:	Topic 2:	Topic 3:
			Personal Pride and Happiness	Being Christian and Nepali	Change of Belief – Preservation of Nepalese culture

Table 28: Contact Sustains Sanskriti - From Appendix J

7.3.1 Personal Pride and Happiness

Around a quarter of the informants (26%) expressed in clear terms their self-respect and enthusiasm first and foremost for their Nepalese culture, then for being a Nepali Christian. Pastor Tamang said that he was proud of being a Nepali, of his culture and of being a Tamang in three different sentences which roughly indicate the attitude of this group of informants who come from Gorkha or Kathmandu; there were no informants in this group from Nuwakot or Tanahun (Topic 1, Table 28).⁵³² The probable reason is that the nature of the interviews, semi-structural and open-ended, makes it difficult to make direct comparisons. Another factor is my approach as a researcher in that different places may engender different kinds of questions. This is the consequence of a methodology which is qualitative (Section 2.2, p. 28).

The informants' attitude to their own socio-religious position in society is remarkable:

- I am proud of being a Nepali
- I am proud of being a Tamang
- I am proud to be called a Christian
- I am proud to be a Christian Nepali
- I am proud of the Nepalese culture
- I am happy to be a Nepali
- Etc. (Appendix J)

In having disassociated these data segments from their contexts some nuances are lost regarding the meaning of the word proud, and I did not enquire specifically into the precise meaning of the word. There is no doubt, Christians are proud, but what exactly it means is not certain, and there are no references to non-Christians to ascertain whether it is a cultural factor for Nepalis to be proud. Presumably some poor misused Nepalis do not feel particularly proud. Therefore, the context is necessary to understand

⁵³² I-02/22

better what they mean by ‘I am proud ...’ A suggestion is that pride among Christians is linked with the ability to identify with other traditional Nepalis and to live the way Nepalis do. Additionally, the self-determination factor sustaining proactive efforts to forge good cross-religious relationships may invoke some pride as may the fact that Christians are a minority group and, each in his or her way, makes attempts to mingle with non-Christians creating another perspective on culture and society which may make them better appreciate their status as Nepalis. So it is suggested that the word proud does mean an appreciation for the society but, linked to the ability they have as Christians to be part of that society, they are also proud not to be isolated.

The context is important for statements. For example, Rekha said in a reply to: *Is it good to be a Christian Nepali?*

Of course I am proud and happy of being a Nepali. God has made me a Nepali. But sometimes seeing so many problems around me, why am I a Nepali, then I may raise questions but I know I should not do that. There are so many cultures I really don’t like.⁵³³

Her add-on ‘But ...’ is the context which gives her firm black-and-white main statement ‘I am proud and happy of ...’ more realism in that it is modified in a pragmatic way in relation to the society she lives in. No doubt she is satisfied as a Christian but her pride and happiness are moderated giving her more credibility. Other informants had similar contextual add-ons which give their statements more depth and character. The attitude seems clear because the values ‘proud’ and ‘happy’ are used, that informants did not have any noticeable mental reservations concerning their conversion decisions, and they embrace their cultural and national inheritance. This suggests that the pride or self-

⁵³³ I-03/9

respect and happiness Christians express even when various modifications are included sustain the cultural area of *sanskriti* in Nepal.

7.3.2 Being Christian and Nepali

I asked some informants the question whether they, as Christians, appreciated their personal sense of culturally belonging to their society, this is Topic 2 (Table 28). I was interested to know whether there was a discrepancy between any anticipated cultural mind-set and associated lifestyle and the one which they actually experienced (Section 7.1). Such a discrepancy could lead either to a crisis as a Christian over time, if this tension was not already a crisis, or to a fabricated Christian lifestyle, meaning they believed they were more (or less) culturally Nepali than they actually were.⁵³⁴ Christian Nepalis who, for whatever reason, become isolated from the rest of the Nepalese society, may claim their right to be Nepalis, and technically they are Nepalis, but may not be reckoned to be so by other traditional Nepalis. I challenged this sense of cultural belonging and 43% answered in a useful way. The questions were as usual never the same between the informants, but arose during the interviews and often I did not have any opportunity to direct the conversation into this area. Below is an extract (Appendix J):

⁵³⁴ Lofland, 1965, 864

Examples of Christians' Cultural State of Mind (Being Christian and Nepali)

Below are tabulated a few selected examples from Appendix J (p. 331). These are offered to provide typical attitudes from informants

I-26	<i>Are you as a Christian Nepali as any other non-Christian Nepali?</i> We are living in a village area, nothing is changed. Especially the Buddhists when they see us we do not live differently. It is the same we are eating; our living style is the same, when we were Buddhists and now.
I-28	<i>The Hindus say, I am a Hindu, I am a real Nepali, can you say the same as a Christian? ...</i> The Hindus say that the Hindus are the traditional and original religion of Nepal and the Christians are from the outside, it is a foreign religion. I am a Nepali and a Christian may cause some problems, I think I may have some problems with that. Nevertheless, I would be happy saying that I am a true Nepali and a true Christian.
I-35	<i>Do you take pride in your culture?</i> Yes. I am a 100% Christian and a 100% Nepali. Some people say that I am not a real Nepali because I am a Christian, particularly the older people.

Table 29: Extract of Christian Cultural State of Mind

Aryal (I-26) who lives in Nuwakot, asserts that his lifestyle is unchanged since he became a Christian. He argues well because, in small remote villages in Nuwakot, there are not many options for choosing lifestyles, and the fields and domestic animals have to be taken care of in the same way by everybody and always require help from other people, whether traditional or non-traditional people. Particularly during the sowing and harvest seasons, no one can take care of his own field alone. Ghaman (I-28) wrestles with this question (Table 29) as he knows that many regard Christianity as a foreign religion and, therefore, may not regard Christians as essentially Nepali. According to informants, more than half (54%) had experienced criticisms from traditional religious people marking out Christianity as a foreign religion (Appendix A). Reproaches from fellow countrymen who question the cultural connection and identity are difficult and sometimes hurtful. Even so, Ghaman's honesty makes him envision problems if he claims full ownership of the Nepalese culture the same way that Hindus do, but he stands by his last statement. Pastor Gurung's (I-35) approach is much in line with his earlier way of breaking barriers when he has negotiated his boundaries. He feels much

at home wherever he goes, but he also knows that his own sense of belonging may not be mutually recognised by all traditional Nepalis.

The overall impression from the different replies is that, although each has his own different aspect to contribute, each informant has a good sense of belonging to the Nepalese culture. Some were clear-cut, others were more nuanced in their answering and one claimed they had left their own culture (Appendix J). According to informants, Christians are not observers from the cultural side-line but have a personal sense of being active players in Nepalese society (Section 7.3.1), modified in accordance with the different experiences of each of the informants (Table 29). I assess that if Christian Nepalis really perceive their personal status in Nepalese society as active players (Ganesh says ‘I feel as much a Nepali as anybody else,’) then they will participate in *sanskriti* as anybody else.⁵³⁵ There will be a difference, though, as has been seen regarding the drinking culture and different approaches to hygiene and education but the all-Nepalese welcoming *sanskriti* attitude by its nature does have profound openings to welcome Christianity. Not everybody in Nepal drinks, the high-castes do not drink, and there are differences between ethnic groups, so therefore there is also space for Christianity. At any rate it appears from the above that the *sanskriti* attitude that forms a Nepali will also be sustained by the Christians.

7.3.3 Change of Belief and Preservation of Nepalese culture

These data segments (Topic 3, Table 28) are not responses to specific questions but arose from the ground during the interviews. I found them interesting because, although the number of informants contributing to this part of the analysis is limited, they are

⁵³⁵ I-19/12

controversial. Several claimed the ability to change faith without changing culture. This is the direction in which this thesis has been headed over earlier chapters but here are some informants, Christian Nepalis, who spontaneously confirmed what Sangita Lama said:

As for me nothing has really changed. I was very young when I was a Buddhist, I do not have any idea about Buddhist culture or custom. But some of our neighbours they used to blame us for following foreign, western religion. We are leaving our old tradition and we are following a new tradition, this Christian western faith, this western culture you are adapting now. I used to say: 'No! I only changed my faith, now I believe in Jesus, I am still a Nepali. My heart, all my things are Nepali, I love my country. Those western countries they worship Jesus Christ, they are worshipping the true God, because of that all the western countries are very rich. If we also would believe in Jesus Christ, we would be rich like them. Still being Nepali, but we would have another living standard. I love Nepal, *dalbhat* and Nepal's national food, *gundruk* and *dhido*.' In fact, in this way I think it is possible to leave a religion and save the culture.⁵³⁶

Even though she was young at the time of her conversion and her knowledge about Buddhist customs is limited, it does not diminish her testimony. When she specifically mentions Buddhist customs from the time before her conversion she distinguishes between the religious part of which she is not fully aware, *sanskar*, and the general Nepalese cultural area of *sanskriti*. Like her, a few others claimed to have changed their belief but kept the culture. Sangita's last statement is powerful, 'In fact, in this way I think it is possible to leave a religion and save the culture' - a parallel to Timoteo D. Gener when he points to Christians approaching their own culture through the inculturation process of redeeming their culture.⁵³⁷ It is not clear whether she developed this reasoning because she had to explain herself or whether this is her general attitude

⁵³⁶ I-24/15-16; *gundruk*: green leaves, curly flower, radishes and mustard, and *dhido*: maize (in boiled water), wheat and meat

⁵³⁷ Gener, 2005, 18; See also fn 449

but she did make herself clear. As a school teacher, she may be used to explaining many issues both to children and to their traditional parents. The idea that it may be possible to change religion without changing culture supports the idea of sustaining *sanskriti*.

7.3.4 Summary of the Contact Factor

The contact factor is central to the lives of Nepali Christians by its focus on the type of cultural relationship and sense of belonging which are managed by Christians and which, at the same time are recognised by traditional people where the boundaries have been negotiated. This approach was identified from an analysis of the relationship based on the GTA category 'FORMING CHRISTIAN IDENTITY' which is different from the GTA category 'CROSS-RELIGIOUS RELATIONSHIPS AND FRIENDSHIPS' that has been used extensively earlier, particularly during the relationship analysis. For this reason, I used the defined word *sanskriti* (Section 5.1, p. 167) in this part of the analysis as adopting a lifestyle as close to the codices of *sanskriti* as possible is significant.

The informants had different ways of expressing their frustrations and joys, some only used short sentences or even just answered in an affirmative or a negative way to a question but many replied with different shades of meaning and managed to share a broader perception of their experience. The three focus areas (Table 28, Topics 1-3) each in their own way sustain or preserve the Nepalese cultural area of *sanskriti* modified according to the ways each informant has negotiated his boundaries which may demonstrate great differences.

7.4 Conclusion

By examining the effects of the three factors we were drawn closer into the lives and thoughts of the informants.

First, one of the distinctive effects of the crisis factor through the process of a conversion is the improbability of converting back to a traditional lifestyle. One obvious reason is that converted people have already re-evaluated their life situation either because of a crisis they went through or from having been disillusioned on various occasions by friends and families but also because of their sincere appreciation of the Christian life and lifestyle where love and care, peace and joy and other beneficial values and emotional states become significant parts of the new life experience. This does not mean that there are no temptations to convert back to the original belief system, as the life of a Christian offers overt challenges. It has been demonstrated that persecutions or a pressure to normalise life into traditional thinking, particularly from family, are hard on Christians. In brief, the theory is that it is doubtful that people return to their traditional lifestyle if they converted from a crisis condition.

Second, the effects of the self-determination factor are proactive initiatives with the focus on getting involved with other people. Although Christians, like any other Nepali, like to work with a partner or in groups, it is noteworthy that many Christian initiatives launched outside the normal church programmes are usually taken on their own initiative, in a team with or without the leadership and the pastor. When individuals take initiatives it is called self-determination. Christians, by having a prayerful and attentive cross-religious attitude, become more observant and genuine in their approach. Therefore the effect of the self-determination factor is an improved love and concern for the traditional religious people. The theory generated is that proactive initiatives engender love and concern for traditional people over time.

Third, boundaries are critically negotiated between Christians and traditional religious people according to the personality and values of Christians which may vary.⁵³⁸ Critical negotiation in this context, as seen earlier in Chapters 5-6, means to not embrace *sanskar* but not blindly accept *sanskriti* either; rather, each Christian has his own ways of negotiating boundaries, sometimes pressing on to the limit. It is an individual matter as *sanskar* domains may not necessarily be the same for everybody; consequently *sanskar* domain limits may vary accordingly just so long as it is acceptable to the wider Christian community. Evangelical Christians recognise each other as Christians beyond their denominational differences and have established interdenominational ties.⁵³⁹ They also recognise each other's distinctive cultural approaches within the same church fellowships. Theoretically, the contact factor produces a lifestyle sustaining the all-Nepalese cultural canopy (*sanskriti*).

Christian life and lifestyle take form according to these three theories but variations of these theories are required to correspond to individual approaches. Not everybody went through a crisis and some converted in groups; self-determination also has a negative side, strong Christian markers penetrate into both *sanskar* and *sanskriti* areas and blur the overall picture of sustaining *sanskriti*. In these ways all three factors are more like strong tendencies than theoretical statements.

Another issue to consider, which should not be underrated, concerns Christians through their entire process from conversion to confident Christians, who have been at the margins of life from a crisis, and cast out from family and been subject to local

⁵³⁸ It is expected that the traditional religious people also negotiate their boundaries when they commit to time with Christians but the primary source of this thesis is from the interviews which are from Christians

⁵³⁹ Niwa, 2014, 68

persecution and who are now determined to be pro-active, standing up for their belief before peers and others. One is tempted to think that such a person either breaks down or becomes strong-minded, therefore for a Christian there may be no middle way.

CHAPTER 8

8. Conclusion

This research has investigated the attitude to society and the way socio-religious boundaries are negotiated by Christian informants of the case study (church) that I selected after having gone through a longer process of possibilities. I wanted to examine in what ways and to what extent their lives changed after they became Christians and to what extent they retained natural links to the culture and society around them. It was expected that a conversion from a traditional religious way of living to Christianity would naturally influence areas of their lifestyle. I have examined in what ways and to what extent the converted handle compromising challenges such as ritual practices and still maintain cross-religious relationships and friendships.

All through the thesis there is evidence that the informants of Asha Church have first and foremost managed to be Nepali in an ordinary sense in that there are natural links to Nepalese culture and not to a foreign culture. There is evidence that the church is not isolated either. By examining the Christians' lives from different perspectives it is shown that they have negotiated their boundaries to process inculturation of the Christian belief in their culture. The Christians' lives from conversion and negotiating of boundaries to linking up with people cross-religiously reveal major information about the life of a Nepali Christian (informant). The development of statements or causal effects which were based on three factors add significant new information about the case church and possibly the Nepali church in general, given that results can be extended to the wider Christian community.

8.1 Introduction

This is a case study and I collected data from a Nepali church. My methodology to meet the research questions was to conduct interviews and analyse using Grounded Theory Analysis (GTA) which is a way of generating data from the ground by comparing different data segments. The complexity of the qualitative data material was the reason for applying GTA as my central methodology. The analysis provided four categories which are like roots of hierarchical trees which by and large contain all data that are necessary for the data analysis. I used a Qualitative Data Analysis programme and all data have been computerised since translation and transcription.

Chapters 3-4 locate the background for the Nepali church in dealing with history and conversion which are essential to Nepali Christian experience which were not generated through Grounded Theory Analysis (GTA). The analyses chapters are Chapters 4-7 where Chapter 4 serves both as a background chapter and an analysis chapter owing to the fact that the social experience of conversion in people's lives has, at least, these two significant trajectories. The analyses Chapters 5, 6 and part of 7 are generated from GTA. GTA contained, though, major parts of the conversion data used for Chapter 4.

8.2 Church History

The case study, the four selected congregations of Asha Church, must be seen as part of the wider Christian community in Nepal which made me look into Nepali church history. I realised that this did not start in the 1950s as an evangelical history went back to the nineteenth century in North India where there was an organised mission to the Nepalis or more specifically to the Lepchas which started in 1870. The church history of Nepal, or rather the history of the Nepali Christians, has a noteworthy beginning as the first hundred years (1870-1970) was a time of preparation for the church to be

established and consolidated in Nepal. The achievements of those one hundred years were primarily outside Nepal along the Indo-Nepal border. This was an eventful time with the climax in 1952 when the first Christians officially moved into Nepal. The church grew from a few hundred people to approximately 2000 Nepali Christians during the first two decades until 1970, although inside Nepal it was still a time of consolidation. The next era was during the Panchayat rule during which time Nepalis who converted to Christianity were called the Panchayat generation. The first Panchayat election was in 1963 and that era ended in 1990. The church also became more complex as denominations emerged and a great number of Christians went abroad for biblical and theological training, and foreigners got more involved in church life, including preaching and teaching, than they had earlier. The new generation of Christians of the third era, those who converted under the new constitution, were called the Democratic generation. Their educational levels were generally higher than the Panchayat generation and the freedom to be Christians influenced them in a different way from the Panchayat generation.

The outline of the history of the Nepali Christians is helpful to embed the case study; the actual case church was established in the 1970s. The history provided significant information useful in understanding the church today. The impact of the translation of the bible into Nepali and the various collections of songs and songbooks throughout the twentieth century both in Nepali and Hindi should not be underestimated. Foreign missionaries encouraged Nepalis to build Nepali socio-cultural churches in Nepal. The beginning of recruitment for entering Nepal particularly in Darjeeling and later at Darjeeling Bible School but also in other locations was significant preparation. During the first era there were house fellowships which, over the years, had formed the de facto inner structure of the Nepali church. I conclude that drawing from major parts of the

Christian history is of great value in understanding the form of the present church of Nepal including the life of the Christians and their attitudes to other people whereby, even today, they recognise each other beyond denominational differences.⁵⁴⁰

8.3 Christian Life, Attitude and General Boundaries

8.3.1 Towards a Change of Allegiance

Conversions in Nepal are associated with life-changing events from the perspective of spiritual encounters, particularly sick or spiritually afflicted people healed by prayer. In the conversion chapter (Chapter 4) selected accounts of traditional practitioners are presented alongside conversion stories to represent a particular spiritual position. This is significant because such stories demonstrate the worldview of many in Nepal which is different from the Christian worldview. Tensions or power encounters arise occasionally between Christians and traditional practitioners. Power encounters, which are confrontations mainly of a spiritual character, set the tone for Christian testimony from the perspective of conversion and for character building. Many informants have animist/shamanist backgrounds as Tamang Buddhists with direct or indirect shamanistic (*bomboistic* and *lamaistic*) experience, generally from minority or indigenous groups (*Janajati*); the traditional Hindu (*Parbatiya*) also have backgrounds deeply rooted in traditional spiritual matters.

There is evidence specifically indicating that opportunities to propagate Christianity within local culturally understandable terms have been taken. There is storytelling connecting the ancestral roots of the *Janajati* (Tamang) with biblical accounts, bible

⁵⁴⁰ Niwa, 2014, 68

reading and acts of love. There is praying for the sick and demon possessed, and praying for domestic animals resembling the practice of local practitioners, and use of strategic prayers to break territorial strongholds from the pantheon of gods and to gain spiritual access prior to evangelism etc. Therefore, there is good reason to believe that Christians in these active spiritual socio-religious domains communicate Christianity and operate in local terms. According to secondary sources, especially on the sociology of religious conversion, crisis is an important predisposing condition for conversion. More than half of the informants reported about their extreme challenges. Therefore crisis is, if not a necessity, then a significant factor in the majority of conversions.

In the light of the evidence, I conclude four things from this first analysis chapter. One is that Christians have spiritual knowledge and belief in their own prayers. Christians have not left spirituality behind when they become Christians; on the contrary, they are able to face severe problems. The second is that crisis is a prominent predisposing condition for conversion and, in line with the suggestions of sociological conversion theory, that crises position people for finding a solution to their life situations. The entire process of conversion forms identity and builds character. The third area has to do with the notion of love, as people convert through different acts of love in one form or other. The fourth area indicates that Christianity proliferates within Nepalese culture.

8.3.2 Negotiating the Boundaries

Christianity is monotheistic and theologically non-inclusive, therefore, Christians may be tempted to opt for either becoming isolated or accepting reduction or assimilation of significant areas of the Christian message (syncretising) when negotiating boundaries of the surrounding socio-religious traditions. As they have adopted a new Christian perspective, Christians face a socio-cultural and religious challenge as they demonstrate

motivation to re-socialise back into their own well-known setting after conversion. The premise of the negotiation is the schism between acceptable and non-acceptable practices in Nepalese society. Naturally, between Christians, many daily chores and tasks are acceptable; non-acceptable practices usually lie within the religious practices of society.

It was extremely helpful to devise the *sanskriti-sanskar* polarisation tool (Figure 11). This tool proved able to distinguish between otherwise interlinked areas of specific ritual practices of castes and ethnic groups under the general umbrella culture of Nepal. This artificial division of Nepalese culture makes it easy socio-religiously to position people and comprehend which boundaries are negotiable by the Christians. The perception of the terms *sanskriti* and *sanskar* is easy to problematise from the perspective of a polarised diagram, but as the meaning of these two terms was adapted as a tool to analyse principles of attitudes as well as of real acts rather than being dogmatic Sanskrit terms, it is possible to separate these integrated acceptable and non-acceptable practices. The socio-religious area of *sanskriti* is generally acceptable and Christians can move within that territory without compromising their Christian belief, whereas the socio-religious area under *sanskar* is generally unacceptable and Christians should stay clear of that territory as that involves participation in various ceremonial performances and traditional religious acts.

Christians do not put a red spot on their forehead (take *tika*) or perform any other traditional religious rituals and they do not drink alcohol, the two highest profiled non-negotiable Christian markers. There are Christians who have managed to pave the way and been able to negotiate almost impossible situations like these two strong markers. *Bhai-tika* is one of the *sanskar* rituals which is negotiated by several informants. The

context of *bhai-tika* is the last day of the festival *Tihar* which is inherently Hindu in a specially valued family environment. The question is whether these seemingly interlocked cultural *sanskar-sanskriti* notions are able to be separated without offending the traditional religious people and without compromising the Christian belief system. The findings show that it is possible, but not everybody succeeds. Instances that succeed have been negotiated to the absolute limit, not only from the side of the Christian but from both sides in that the Christian has emphasised and cultivated the *sanskriti* notions and traditions to compensate for abstaining from taking *tika*. The *tika* itself as a rite is thus not negotiated from the side of the Christian but is negotiated between the traditional religious people and this is their invaluable contribution to a solution. The Christian cannot negotiate that rite, but the traditional religious people can, if they agree to it. In the same way, the findings demonstrated negotiations in different ceremonial situations at weddings and funerals as well as other kinds of participations such as picnics and drinking. All of these events have boundaries that need to be negotiated and every situation contains challenges.

Negotiating the various boundaries, with self-determination as an underlying instigating factor, is a good exercise for every Christian, as many wrestle with notions and issues from theology, prejudiced thoughts and social challenges. Negotiating boundaries to the limit requires involvement, boldness and love. I conclude that negotiating boundaries in general, and to the limit in particular, creates character. It has a mirroring effect among traditional religious people if they agree to a negotiation, as in their own way they are investing energy and taking religious chances.

8.3.3 Cross-Religious Relationships and Friendships

The core category, CROSS-RELIGIOUS RELATIONSHIPS AND FRIENDSHIPS, emerged as the result of data from the field. The analyses of these data about Christians' cross-religious relationships and friendships became a challenge primarily because of the complexity of qualitative data. It was necessary to find a systematic analysis method, a method able to transform complex qualitative data segments into simple comparable forms. The outworking of suitable qualifiers was a breakthrough as it made this transformation possible. Relevant data segments, determined by GTA, were qualified and transformed into simple integers and were presented in the form of two diagrams. The diagrams present the level of interest and proactive involvement that Christians demonstrate to establish or maintain cross-religious relationships and friendships with traditional Nepalis.

The presentation of the qualified values in the first diagram (Figure 13, p. 230) indicated that Christians are not isolated from the rest of the Nepali population but the majority has good cross-religious contact. There was a minority of Christians who, for various reasons and in varying degrees, favour Christian company. This finding is central with respect to the research thesis. Half of the informants (54%) supplied sufficient information to generate the second diagram. It was possible to form a diagram of the same kind as the former (Figure 14, p. 248). From the diagram and the value assessments, the vast majority has or wants cross-religious friendships.

It is conclusive that Christians' attitude and approach to the traditional religious people is not negative and that they in no way have become isolated as a Christian group of people. According to the informants Christians are treated like most other traditional religious people, although there are exceptions as there are Christians who prefer

Christian company and also prefer Christian friendships instead of cross-religious companionship. Some are even uneasy being among traditional religious people and they gave specific reasons for that, but no one seems to have become segregated from the Nepali people. The fact that there, after all, are different approaches to cross-religious companionship does not seem to divide Christians. This kind of tolerance is interesting and is connected to the Nepali Christian people's self-determination factor (the issue of making one's own decisions and respecting other's decisions).

From a specific extract and use of qualifiers, it was shown that Christians generally or corporately with some exceptions, knowingly or unknowingly, support or maintain *sanskriti*. These were the most important conclusive findings which formulate a response to the research question and the main thesis.

8.3.4 Crisis, Self-Determination and Contact

The three factors, the crisis factor and the self-determination and contact factors, were respectively extracted from the three analyses chapters to generate theory, an analysis made possible because of the causal effects of the factors. The theories are the causal connections which can be generated from scrutinising the factors under the influence of qualifiers.

The discrepancy between an imagined ideal state of affairs and the reality of life, that which in this thesis is called a crisis, urges people to look for a solution which occasionally can be found through a change of allegiance. The research has identified that people who convert to Christianity from a crisis condition welcome their new life situation and identity even though some testify to a troublesome time from family right after conversion. In cases where they convert totally as opposed to just verbally (see

discussion Section 4.2.4, p. 159) the crisis factor has the causal effect that Christians will not leave or deny their Christian belief and re-convert to their original traditional religion even under persecution. The logical explanation is that these people, as they have been stretched to the limits, have already re-evaluated their life and made their final decision of their religious affiliation.

The negotiation of boundaries involves the art of navigating within the socio-religious domains, safely adopting traditional codices without compromising the Christian belief; usually in the neighbourhood aiming for establishing as natural a Nepalese life as possible. Christians' individual personalities and life situations cause unconformity both generally in their intentions to establish a Nepalese lifestyle and specifically in their socio-religious approaches and levels of proactive efforts to establish and maintain cross-religious associations. Conformity is found in church or at other Christian meetings, the unconformity comes from the perspective of approaching the traditional Nepalis. This factor of self-determination makes Christians flexible as a people. This does not mean that Christians should not obey their leadership but it means that they should not be regarded as an unyielding group of people. As Nepalis they seem to know what is acceptable and what is not by staying within the cultural area of *sanskriti* and safely guarding themselves from *sanskar*. Consensus and self-determination are not opposites, but it is an arena with opportunities for Christians to operate under dynamic conditions. Most Christians negotiate their personal boundaries if not to the limit then seriously. The causal factor which the theory is based on is that the proactive involvement and sometimes strategic and precarious planning force Christians to think about traditional religious people empathetically or in a compassionate way. The conclusion is that the self-determination factor produces care and love.

One of the most significant common values to Nepalis irrespective of socio-religious background is family, friends and the local society which is usually either the village or the town area. Mastering the negotiation of the boundaries of communication and relating to traditional Nepalis is obviously a strong Christian asset or skill. As Brian Mandell from Harvard Kennedy School says, it is ‘about build[ing] winning coalitions, and craft[ing] robust agreements ... it is about shaping one’s circumstances ...’ (e.g. *bhai-tika*).⁵⁴¹ Although his focus is on building coalitions there are parallels to this research. Christians are focused, as has been demonstrated, on evangelistic accounts, acts of love, healings through prayers and in daily matters etc. Therefore in Mandell’s terms the contact factor meets building coalitions, crafting agreements and shaping circumstances for the sake proactively of normalising, even enhancing, relationships with traditional Nepali company where possible. The negotiations are primarily within the cultural territory of *sanskriti* from the perspective of the Christians although traditional religious people may make negotiations within the area of *sanskar* because Christians can only on rare occasions operate in *sanskar* (Section 8.3.2). From this information, it is assessed that the contact factor embraces Christian ways of living according to the codices of *sanskriti* and consequently generally maintain and sustain *sanskriti*.

Finally in this section the effects of the three factors are critiqued. The effect of the crisis factor is a lasting conversion but only about half of the informants expressed sufficient information to contribute to this information. The other half did not mention crisis even though they may have had crises. The self-determination factor sees Christians getting involved with traditional Nepalis through negotiations, and theory is

⁵⁴¹ Mandell, 2015

formed from that, but some people negotiate beyond what seems to be acceptable and are in danger of positioning themselves outside the area of love and care. They may cause fear and confusion as was demonstrated earlier (p. 277). Although informants by and large have good relationships there are Christians who do favour Christian company as there are people who try to avoid any traditional event. The contact factor is expected to strengthen *sanskriti* but will depend on the individual. To the extent that Christians want to tone down venturing into cross-religious company, the cultural area of *sanskriti* will be more difficult to sustain and maintain. So with these three precautions in mind the three factors cause the above effects that form the theories.

8.4 Anthropological Contributions

After conversion to Christianity Christians are faced with a new life which requires that personal and corporate boundaries are negotiated from the perspective of inculturation. Christians need to meet the traditional socio-religious life of Nepal realistically and from that platform optimise their negotiations without compromising the Christian belief. In light of the above, the contribution of this thesis to the general body of knowledge regarding the Nepali church is summarised in the following points.

The self-determination factor indicates a high level of individualism. It has been established that Christians reacting to different socio-religious challenges cannot be regarded as an inflexible group because of the self-determination factor (Section 7.2). Christians have individual and dissimilar ways of approaching traditional religious people, cultural events, festivals and ceremonies, but tensions between Christians seldom arise as there is a mutual tolerance for the approaches Christians select. The anthropological contribution from the Christian group is that each individual is strong in basic dogmatic theology but extremely different in their various expressions and

approaches to events because of their individual ways of negotiating. In this way local theology develops.

Christians make serious attempts to succeed in negotiating their boundaries; the main reason is to maintain or establish good relationships with traditional Nepalis. At times Christians need to prepare prior to a given negotiation which may require being strategic in the entire manoeuvre of negotiating the boundary (see examples, Section 5.2.1.2, p. 186). Therefore, such negotiations have been found to foster care and concern because of the work involved to make them succeed, at times entailing a mirroring effect among the traditional religious people because often they also need to engage in the negotiation to make it succeed. The Christians negotiate to the limit within the cultural area of *sanskriti* which is their acceptable area, and the traditional religious people negotiate within their limits of the cultural area of *sanskar*, which is their traditional religious area of the culture. If they can meet, there is great chance of success.

Individual capabilities to negotiate vary greatly between Christians. This means they set up individual safety zones to guard their Christian markers, particularly of alcohol and tobacco and avoid getting actively involved in traditional rites and rituals. Some Christians appear to function almost like *jhankris* (shamans) among the Nepalis allegedly because of the way they approach people to offer their service; other people prefer Christian company.

These are other contributions: First, in critically negotiated cross-religious relationships and friendships a Christian lifestyle or attitude develops which maintains and supports the all-Nepalese socio-religious culture (*sanskriti*). Second, it seems conclusive, based

on the correlation which is identified between Christians' cross-religious relationships and friendships, that religion is not a hindrance for friendships across religions but rather is dependent on Christians' interest in proactively getting involved with traditional Nepalis. Third, the emerging of Christians and possibly of churches in a village area may create a displacement of spiritual power and authority in that area. Christians represent a new power and it is bound to some extent to change the spiritual hierarchy and balance in a village community (Section 4.1.1 & 4.1.5).

8.5 Responses to Research Questions and Hypothesis

At this point the contribution to the body of knowledge made by this thesis is built around the ways Christians negotiate their boundaries in different connections. This both concerns the way they face traditional people maintaining their own strong markers and the way they, as non-traditional Nepalis, make serious attempts to intermingle with traditional religious people, primarily their non-Christian family and the neighbourhood.

One way Christians (informants) have been able to get involved with people resemble the way some witch-doctors do, and this has been interesting from the perspective of the research question because the spirituality of the Christians does not seem to have changed. Obviously their allegiance to spiritual power has changed but the fact that Christians are knowledgeable about Nepalese spirit life and yet capable of operating as Christians position them centrally in a spiritual space of Christian power, spirits of the Nepali pantheon, and sickness or spiritual afflictions (Section 4.1.1, p. 130). The Christians are exercising the authority which they believe they have been given as commanding bastions in that space. This means that people are beginning to call for Christians for healing, if they have heard about them, when the *jhankri* or *lama* (shaman) fails to provide solutions.

The way not-strong markers dominate Christian life is individual but Christians attend caste meetings, low-caste people stay in their castes carrying on working as usual, they negotiate for example *chhewar* (ritual hair-cutting), wear Nepali clothes and adornments, the children go to school with traditional Nepali children etc. just to mention a few things. Strong markers are also negotiated on an individual basis - the self-determination factor shows up here powerfully. Differences in levels of activity and decision-making are huge, Christians even from the same church and area may have dissimilar approaches to the same events. But there is mutual acceptance of whatever decision is made. This conclusion is born out by my research which is a case study; there may be outspoken proponents in more urban churches who cause controversy when it comes to inculturation issues.

It is also conclusive that differences in Christian attitudes, as we have seen, their friendships and their relationships or natural acquaintances, vary a lot between the informants. There are Christians who feel more safe and comfortable with Christians and prefer Christian company. Even so, none of the informants is isolated from Nepalese society. The majority of all informants, more than two out of three, do feel at ease among traditional religious people and, in varying degrees, are determined to spend time with them. Four out of five informants who responded to whether they had a personal friendship claimed that this was the case or that they would like to have a cross-religious friendship. The support of Nepalese culture (*sanskriti*) in different ways is interesting regarding the research question because it means that Christians make an attempt and prefer to live as Nepalis.

I conclude that there is good reason to believe that Christians communicate Christianity in local terms.

8.6 Future Research

There are many open ends in this thesis. Research focusing on what love and peace mean to a Nepali before and after conversion would be a contribution to comprehend Nepalese Christianity even better. Another issue is the negotiation of some of the difficult boundaries like *bhai-tika* and drinking. How many participate in *Dashain* and what are they doing and why? It would be relevant to the Nepali church to explore these issues.

One issue that has been looked into is prayer as Nepali Christians generally have very strong prayer lives. Research into strategic prayer, spiritual prayer for healing the spiritually afflicted and other kinds of prayers would be challenging to the wider Christian community outside Nepal.

The construction of a local theology for the Nepali church could be taken much further and be looked at more systematically than this thesis has been able to do in that the analyses chapters in particular touched on a number of Nepalese cultural concepts and notions relating to this topic. House fellowships, the Christian prayer life, the Nepali story-telling culture, the way they negotiate cultural boundaries, the way they perceive spiritual phenomena, and other issues in this thesis combined with a further field work study to explore how the general teaching of Christianity in the churches is taking place, are ingredients which can support the development of a local theology. It would be beneficial to include a discussion on the use of rites and rituals in traditional Nepal as part of this development, particularly at funerals, see Sharma.⁵⁴² The provision of a local

⁵⁴² Sharma, 2013

theology is a significant task for further research regarding understanding the Nepali Church.

I have not dealt with many factors including language challenges, leadership issues, poverty, differences between castes, certain ceremonial rites and persecution. I asked whether Christians prayed in their indigenous (*Janajati*) language where appropriate; I sensed there is a great unexplored anthropological and linguistic area which could be interesting. I deliberately avoided church leadership issues because I sensed this would be rather demanding; from having been simple among the Panchayat generation Christians it has developed into a more sophisticated and global way yet with strong links to the basic Nepalese way of living. It would be interesting possibly comparing this with other forms of leadership patterns in Nepal. It would also be interesting to observe how many poor Christians have managed to establish a livelihood after they became Christians. This is a great unexplored issue in Nepal among Christians.

I touched on differences between castes in this thesis but since 70% are Tamang it was not the right group of informants for this sort of study, but a broader ethnographic study among Christians would be a great contribution. There are for example only a handful of Christians among the Tibetans in Nepal. The way I looked into the negotiation of rituals and intoxicants and of other matters should be explored to see if corporate consensus could be obtained among Nepali Christians to preserve Nepalese culture. There are innumerable stories about persecution but very little research about the causes and reasons behind persecution, who persecutes and can it be avoided? Although the caste system has been abolished by the Nepalese government it is still alive among people. Therefore persecutions and expulsions from families are still going on all over Nepal. A deeper sociological study of persecution would be of great interest.

These suggestions should only stimulate other researchers to engage in further studies about the Nepali church.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Markers and Stereotypes

Note: the table on the next page only records items that were explicitly and spontaneously raised or as answers to my request; therefore empty fields do not provide any kind of information.

Below is shown a copy of the category FORMING CHRISTIAN IDENTITY (Figure 9, p. 166) which is made up of three high-level concepts as sketched. One of the concepts, Christian Nepali Stereotypes and Markers, contains the information giving rise to the table below.

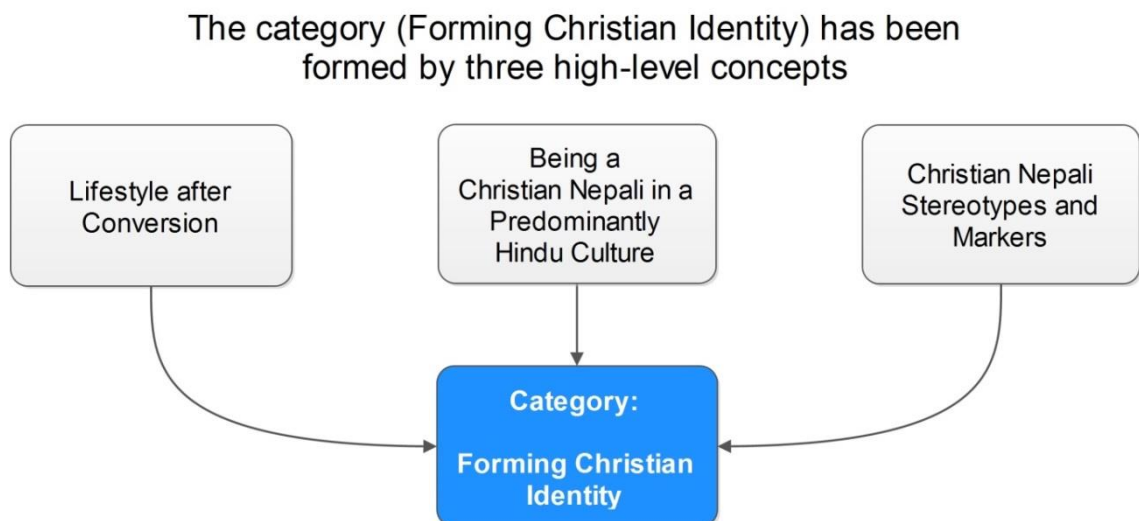


Figure 18: Grounded Theory: Forming Christian Identity

The EXCLUSIVE top part of the table is used in the thesis (Table 12, p. 180), the rest is shown here for information.

Markers and Stereotypes Mapped	Informant-01	Informant-02	Informant-03	Informant-04	Informant-05	Informant-06	Informant-07	Informant-08	Informant-09	Informant-10	Informant-11	Informant-12	Informant-13	Informant-14	Informant-15	Informant-16	Informant-17	Informant-18	Informant-19	Informant-20	Informant-21	Informant-22	Informant-23	Informant-24	Informant-25	Informant-26	Informant-27	Informant-28	Informant-29	Informant-30	Informant-31	Informant-32	Informant-33	Informant-34	Informant-35	Totals	
(EXCLUSIVE)																																					
DO NOT sacrifice to the idols	X	X		X	X			X	X																			X		X							8
DO NOT take puja, nor worship idols nor go to the temple				X			X									X	X				X					X		X				X				8	
DO NOT put on tika							X	X	X						X	X	X			X						X	X		X	X	X	X			X	13	
DO NOT drink		X		X				X				X			X	X	X	X	X						X			X		X	X	X	X			15	
DO NOT smoke		X						X				X	X		X	X											X	X		X			X			10	
DO NOT gamble		X		X																																2	
DO NOT burn the dead, and Do Not perform post-dead rituals (kiriya, lasts up to one year)																							X			X							X			3	
DO NOT put a religious scarf around the neck																														X						1	
DO NOT eat cow-meat																									X											1	
(POSITIVE)																																					
DO pray for sick people				X																X																2	
DO have a good life style (good character, never steal, helpful)				X	X																		X	X			X									4	
DO speak the truth (never lie), are trustworthy, have a good way of speaking					X							X																								2	
DO have good houses and educations, and good and clean clothes, and they do have more money than average because of their lifestyle		X		X										X													X									4	
DO become known for their good schools and nursing				X																										X						2	
DO become known for their practical and cheap ways of conducting marriage ceremonies																													X							1	
DO respect the elders and love the young ones yet without compromising their faith by touching the feet of elders.							X					X								X							X									4	
DO work 6 days and not 7 days a week, and still succeed.																								X												1	
(NEGATIVE)																																					
It is a foreign religion, a western religion	X	X	X		X	X		X			X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X					X		X		19	
Accused of receiving money and goods from foreigners	X		X				X													X						X										5	
Carnal Christians impose a negative influence on society, bear bad testimony about the Christians.								X						X				X								X							X			5	
Christian Nepalis accused of being cow-eaters										X					X							X														3	
TRP claim all gods are the same			X																				X													2	
Christian Nepalis accused of breaching the traditional religious practices																				X																1	

APPENDIX B

Appendix B: Faith Based Organisations (FBOs)

This appendix contains a list of FBOs, information retrieved from Nepal Church History Project Archives, YALE University Record Group No. 215.⁵⁴³

A02: Missions in Nepal (Post revolution, 1950s onwards)

BMMF / Interserve 1956-1993
BMS 1984-1989
Church-Mission Relationships
Impact Asia 1994
INF - Church-Related (see also INF Archives)
INF - Church-Related (see also INF Archives) 1977-1994
MAF 1991 4 9 A 02 09 01 Methodist Church, UK 1984-1991
Methodist Church, USA 1954-1962, n.d.
Ministries Network, Kathmandu (formerly Himalayan Ministries)
Nepal Leprosy Fellowship
Nepal Leprosy Trust (NLT) 1975-2001
Nepal-Mission
Roman Catholics 1952-1985
SDA, Banepa 1976
SIM 4 4 A 02 04 01 CMS, UK
TEAM 1970-1994
Tear Fund 1986, n.d.
The Leprosy Mission 1984-1986
UMN & Church (see also UMN Archives) 1954-1994
Wycliffe 1994

A03: Christian Organisations in Nepal

Aglow 1990
American Bible Society Publications Re Bible Society In Nepal 1990-1992
Asian Outreach 1985-1991
Bhutan Camps 1992
Bible Society In Nepal / Nepal Bible Society - General 1975-1993
Christian Business Centre 1997
Christian Cemetery, Kathmandu 1996
Christian Professionals' Fellowship / Believers' Professional Fellowship 1990-1994
Christian Study And Research Centre 1994
Christian Women Society 1997
David Evangelistic Outreach 1976-1987
Dirgha Memorial Mission
Disciples for Christ, Nepal 1995
FOCUS 1986-1993
Follow-up & Counseling Center
Forward Looking

⁵⁴³ Yale, 2009; the info in this archive was primarily collected before 1990s, and many new missions, Christian organisations, Bible colleges, etc have emerged since then

Gideons 1972
 Good News Communications Center
 Gospel For Asia, Nepal & Bodhartha Prakashan 1991-1995
 Gospel Recordings 1951-1993
 Great Commission 1987-1991
 Handicap Care Home 1997
 HDCS (NCF) 1993
 Help the Children, Street Children Ministry 1994
 Himalayan Crusader For Christ 1994
 Himalayan Outreach Mission (HOM-Nepal)
 Himalayan Relief Service, Nepal 1994
 Hospital Christian Fellowship 1994
 Indreni - Ministry 2001
 International Bible Society Nepal 1998
 International Fellowship For The Handicapped 1992-1997
 International Needs 1988-1995
 Kids' Learning Centre 1996-1998
 Korean Epilepsy Association
 Missions' Commission Of Nepal 2004
 MTH Nepal 1994
 Nazareth Educational Services
 NBCBS 1978-2001
 NCCEF / Bal Sangati 1983-1996
 NCF Hostel 1961-1975
 Nepal Campus Crusade For Christ 1978-1994
 Nepal Christian Nurses' Fellowship 1998
 Nepal Christian Students Fellowship
 Nepal Evangelistic Teams 1987
 Nepal Every Home Concern 1983-2000
 Nepal Gospel Outreach Centre 1993-2001
 Nepal Mission Training Center ca. 2001
 Nepal Pen Pals 1972
 Nepal Prayer Fellowship 1982-1994
 Nepal Youth For Christ 1969-1981
 New Life 1982
 Operation Mobilisation 1964-2001
 Orphanages - Ghar-Aangan, Kathmandu 1995
 Orphanages - Hallelujah Children's Haven 1989-1990
 Orphanages - Mendies Haven 1987-1991
 Orphanages - Nepal Christian Orphanage 1983
 Orphanages – New Life Home
 Orphanages - Sahara Children's Home
 Orphanages - Salvation Children's Home 1998-2001
 Outreach Nepal Ministries 1998
 Peace Rehabilitation Center (Shanti Punarsthapana Griha) 1998
 Prabodh Group 1999-2002
 Prison Fellowship 1991-1994
 Scripture Union, Nepal 1992-1998
 Shanti Punarstapana Ghreeha 1994
 Share And Care 1993-1994
 Solidarity International Academy, Nepal 2001-2003
 Sowers' Ministry 1987
 Students' Fellowship House (Kathmandu Tyrannus Hall) 1991-1996
 Teach Ministries 1997-1999
 Teachers' Christian Fellowship Of Nepal / Nepal Christian Teachers' Fellowship 1986
 United Christian Service Network In Nepal
 Witness For Nepal 1993
 YMCA, Nepal 1994-1996
 Youth With A Mission 1985-1994
 YWCA, Nepal 1993

A04: Church Files and Associations of Churches in Nepal

Agape Fellowship & Southampton UK Connection 1987, 1994
Assembly Of God & Discipleship Training Centre, Kathmandu 1986-1993
Baptists In Nepal 1993-2003
El Shaddai Churches 1992
Evangelical Christian Alliance Of Nepal / Four-Square 1990-1996
Evangelical Christian Fellowship Of Nepal 1994-1996
Evangelical Friends Church Nepal 1996
Isai Nari Samaj 1997
Kathmandu Interchurch Relationships 1957-1993
National Churches Fellowship Nepal 2000-
Nepal Alliance Of Presbyterian Churches 1996
Nepal Christian Fellowship / National Churches Fellowship Nepal 1990-1999
Nepal Christian Fellowship 1960-1981
Nepal Christian Fellowship 1982-1989
Nepal Christian Forum 1997
Nepal Christian Society 1996-1999
Nepal Christian United Fellowship 1996
Roman Catholic Churches In Nepal 1991-1997

A 05 Individual Churches in Nepal

General - Miscellaneous 1959-1994
General - Anchal Church Outlines 1987
Amp Pipal, Gorkha 1959-1987
Aradhana Mandali, Kathmandu 1980-1988
Bagh Bazaar, Pokhara 1971-1993
Baglung & Ellen Meincke Notes 1961-1987
Barpak 1978-1996
Bhaktapur, Pastor Tir Bahadur Dewan & Denis Roche Prayer Letters From 1987, 1986-2004
Bharatpur
Biratnagar 1970
Birganj 1987,1993
Butwal 1965-2000
Chepangs 1984-1993
Church Of God 1988-1992
Dhanwar Rais 1975-1987
Dharan 1987
Ghorahi, Dang 1987
Gyaneshwar, Kathmandu / Nepali Isai Mandali 1961-2003
Hetauda, Ratmate 1987
Jhimruk 1992-1993
Jumla 1989-1994
Kathmandu Valley - Miscellaneous Churches 1983-2000
Lamagara, Tamang Churches 1981-1984
Nepalganj 1987
Okhaldhunga 1966-1987
Paimey 1987-1999
Patan Church 1962-2000
Putali Sadak, Kathmandu 1950-2003
Ramghat, Pokhara 1957-2002
Raxaul 1964-1987
Santals 1957
Sherpas 1986-1987
Surkhet 1987-1996
Tansen 1955-1992
Tikapur 1982-1987

Khimti
Bhairawa
Morang District
Jharlang
Nawal Parasi
Baitadi
Galyang
Jajarkot
Pokhara
Dhading
Aashish Mandali, Dhankuta
Mugu
Anandit Church, Koteswar, Kathmandu

A07 Bible Training for Nepalis

ABEN & Consultation On Theological Education In Nepal, 1993
Agape Bible School, Pokhara
Bible Training Centre For Pastors
Church Builders' Bible Institute (David Cloud)
Darjeeling Hills Bible School, Mirik
DBCI / NBCI
Discipleship Training Centre, Lalitpur
Doon Bible College, Dehra Dun
Great Commission Training Centre, Kathmandu
Himalayan Ezra Institute
Kathmandu Bible College
Life Bible Institute, Kathmandu
Living Word Center
Miscellaneous
NBI / NBA
Nepal Bible College, Kathmandu
Nepal Theological Seminary, P.O. Box 3388, Kathmandu
Nepal Theological Seminary, P.O. Box 3535, Kathmandu / Nepal Ebenezer Bible College
Nepali Bible School, Gorakhpur
New Theological College, Dehra Dun
Presbyterian
Short Term Bible Schools, INF Assisted, Pokhara
Short Term Bible Schools, UMN Assisted
Southern Asia Bible College

APPENDIX C

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Ole Kirchheiner, Nepal, Spring 2009

Personal

1. Personal conversion story. Family and ethnographical (the branch of anthropology that describes and studies the individual cultures of mankind) background.
2. Explanation on how they relate to their former religion. Does the Christian faith make them despise their religious and cultural heritage, leaving a cultural vacuum wherein dependency develops on another culture, for example the western culture?
3. Which part of the Bible do you prefer, and why? What was it that first struck you reading the Bible?
4. Are there relationships or practices from earlier you miss? Affairs or matters which deprive you of honour or privileges?

Cultural

5. Do you take pride in your own culture? Do you see practices and faiths in the Nepalese culture and religious traditions which can be paralleled with the Bible, or which can be seen as starting points for a journey to Christ? Are there any substitute practices? How do you resolve conflicts? What reflects cultural values?
6. Were there any specific means by which Christianity became adapted to the Tamang culture of Gorkha, for example resolving conflicts of cultural values or concerns for Tamang identity?
7. Dynamic interaction with the culture indicates that Christianity truly has become embedded in the culture. Has Christianity influenced Buddhism or Hinduism or any of the traditional religious beliefs in this area? This point along with no.2 may be asked to non-Christians as well.

Christian Identity

8. Were there any particular times and circumstances during which you noticed the greatest Christian growth?
9. If the Tamang language is your first language, how is it to use the Tamang language for the prayer life, to read Biblical texts, for preaching, singing, evangelising or while talking about God among friends or family. Have there been any difficulties? How is God addressed in Tamang? Do they in fact use Nepali?

10. Is there any form of Christianity which is more acceptable than other forms? Can you fellowship with all Christian Nepalese, are there any you would rather exclude and for what reasons? Can you fellowship with all Nepalese?

Theological and Christian Challenges

11. The Christians during the first forty years of Christianity in Nepal are usually called the first generation Christians. After the Democracy in 1990 we talk about the second generation Christians. Do you see any particular danger or challenge to this group of new Christian believers, any specific things they should be aware of?
12. Do you see things in your culture or your former religious tradition that might help you understand the Bible or understand who Jesus is? Understand why he had to suffer and die, the blood sacrifices, the sin etc.?

Historical

13. Talk about the development of the leadership in the church.
14. Talk about the history of the church.

Other

APPENDIX D

Appendix D: Mastra's Contextualisation Programme

Mastra's Programme: ⁵⁴⁴

1. Seek to proclaim and live the gospel of Jesus Christ in ways relevant to the Balinese people.
2. Help Balinese Christians to gain a greater appreciation of their cultural heritage within the context of their faith and to find new ways of expressing the faith within their culture.
3. Stimulate greater use of Balinese architecture and cultural symbols in expressing the Christian faith within the Balinese culture.
4. Develop vocational training programs for youth which will lead to specific jobs and will help perpetuate their cultural heritage.
5. Help modern youth to learn ancient skills of dancing, wood carving, etc.
6. Establish a craft co-operative, a tour service co-operative and other organisations and programs which would be helpful in achieving the other specific goals of the church.
7. Build and improve the lay training centre so that it can be used as a guest house during the tourist season.
8. Stimulate greater inter-religious dialogue and co-operation among Balinese residents.
9. Seek to find ways to gain greater social and financial benefits from the expanding tourist industry for Balinese people.
10. Attempt to provide a relevant ministry and mutual self-help program among young travellers from all over the world, especially those who establish semi transient residence in Bali.
11. Help villagers to learn new skills of modern farming, nutrition, health care, and family planning.
12. Improve youth counselling service in the cities and the villages.
13. Improve and expand the migration programmes.

⁵⁴⁴ Sugden, 1997, 129

APPENDIX E

Appendix E: The Convert and Basis of the New Life

Excerpt from Gilliland, 1998: ⁵⁴⁵

In the 1930s, when the church was new in Nigeria's Gongala State, Wadira and his wife, Binta, were the first couple to become Christians in their village. The missionaries taught them that married couples should eat together. Unfortunately, the habit of eating together is something that the missionaries had misinterpreted as being important to African Christians just because it was important to them. It is considered strange, even today, in most west African societies for the husband and the wife to eat together, or even at the same time. A wife prepares the food and gives it first to her husband or to any group of men that may be in the house. After they have finished, the wife or wives and the children eat. Because certain families act in certain ways in the west, the missionaries felt this should be imitated by Christians in Africa. Beyond this, the assumption was wrong, since eating habits have little to do with whether a person is Christian or not. Even so, Wadira and Binta dutifully complied with the teaching and began to eat their evening meal together in view of the whole village. Before long, ridicule from their family and friends was so great that they moved outside the village and began to live quite separately from the rest of their kin. Not only did Christianity appear to be an alien religion, but also it was assumed by all who turned to Christ that part of the price the Christians pay is separation from traditional society and learning foreign habits.

The consequence of this move by Wadira and Binta was that a small 'Christian village' grew up apart from the rest of the people. This was the worst kind of solution to problems raised by conversion, and it carried a message that was precisely the opposite of what the gospel really is. Being a Christian meant dislocation instead of reconciliation. Instead of being a force for transformation, Christianity fostered separation. The traditional world of the convert is intensely real, and the community of Christians also brings a powerful set of new relationships. Issues raised by this identity crisis that comes as a result of belonging in two worlds are very difficult for the convert anywhere, but they are especially hard where the church is a newly emerging community and where there is little precedent for Christianity or where there are few Christians. How is the convert to live under new lordship while the authority of the natural, earthly ties is so pervasive?

⁵⁴⁵ Gilliland, 1998, 122-123

APPENDIX F

Appendix F: Segment Values of Qualifiers for Relationship

I-num	Informant "name"	Start Position	End Position	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Σ/(n)
I-01	Birbal Tamang	5	5		-3	-3		-5					
		17	17		-3	-3		-5					
		12	12					3					-3
I-02	Bishal Bahadur Tamang	22	22					5					
		15	15			2							4
I-03	Rekha Tamang	11	11									5	
		20	20		3	3							4
I-04	Devi Bahadur Tamang	12	12		-5								
		13	13					-2					
		17	17				2						
		18	18	3									1
		23	23	7									
I-05	Ganesh Bahadur Tamang	23	23		-5								-5
I-06	Tek Bahadur Tamang	8	8						10				
		11	11			5		5					
		17	17						10				
		6	7									5	7
I-07	Sita Tamang	9	9			7		7					7
I-08	Srijana Khadka	9	9									0	
		15	15				6					3	
		10	11				-5					-5	
		17	19				-5				-5		
		12	12		5					5			
		6	6									-5	
		20	20				2	3					0
I-09	Surya Tamang	10	10									5	
		12	12			7				7			
		10	10		5	5		5					
		8	8		1								
		14	14	5									5
I-10	Pabitra Kumal	9	9				0						0
I-11	Bhim Kali Devkota	10	10							5			
		7	7			3		5					4
I-12	Chandra Maya Hamal	19	19				0						
		14	14						5			9	
		15	15									0	
		16	16		3		3					3	3

I-num	Informant "name"	Start Position	End Position	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Σ/(n)
I-13	Hem Kumar Tamang	9	9					2			-5		-2
I-14	Sukuman Lama	7	7					5					
		10	10		3								4
I-15	Sunita Maya Tamang	8	8						5				
		9	9			5		2					
		10	11					1					3
I-16	Indra Kumari BK	8	8									10	
		10	10								-7		
		9	9					-5		-5			
		11	11		0			0				-2	-1
I-17	Santosh Bahadur BK	11	11		-3			7	7		8		
		9	9		5								
		10	10		-3	-5					0		2
I-18	Ranjana Magar	8	8									9	
		5	5				1				5		
		6	6				3			5			5
I-19	Ganesh Lama	7	7									-5	
		9	9							-8			
		11	11		-2							-7	-6
I-20	Rita Tamang	10	10							0			
		7	7									6	
		12	12									9	
		15	15				5	5	5				
		9	9				5						5
I-21	Kabita Maya Tamang	9	9					5					
		7	7					5				3	
		12	12								3	0	3
I-22	Ram Bahadur Tamang	10	10									4	
		11	11							8		8	
		18	18			6		6	7				
		19	19			6							
		12	12					5					
		13	13			-2		2				0	5
I-23	Hari Prasad Tamang	9	9		5	5		7		5		5	
		7	7				2			6			
		11	11								-3		
		19	19	5									4
I-24	Sangita Lama	12	12									7	
		13	13							4		4	
		15	16			5		5	5				
		14	14			2							5
I-25	Bhuban Tamang	7	7			-2			-5				
		8	9					3	5		2		

I-num	Informant "name"	Start Position	End Position	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Σ/(n)
		16	16	5									
		9	10		3	3		5					2
I-26	Aryal Bahadur Tamang	16	17				5			5		5	
		15	16		8	8		8	8			8	
		8	11		4	5	6			5	4		
		14	15			1							
		7	8				2						
		12	13			3				5			5
I-27	Bhim Bahadur Tamang	15	15						5			5	
		17	17					-2				2	
		19	20									8	
		20	21									5	
		15	16						5				
		18	19				3						4
I-28	Ghaman Tamang	5	5		-5		-5					5	
		9	10						-2			6	
		11	11		0								0
I-29	Shiva Kumari Tamang	13	13						7				
		13	13						5			5	
		7	8							5	5		
		7	7				5	3			3	6	
		10	10		-2							5	
		9	9		-6			-4				2	
		11	11		4			4				4	3
I-30	Binod Tamang	8	8				6				5	5	
		12	12				8						
		8	8									2	
		13	13						6	9			
		10	10				0						
		11	11			-5							
		9	9			8		8		10			5
I-31	Arjun Bahadur Tamang	12	12				6						
		10	10			2						5	
		11	11			3			5				4
I-32	Gyanu Pokharel Tamang	7	7									5	
		14	14									8	
		8	8						7			6	7
I-33	Deepak Bahadur Gurung	10	11				2			6	6	7	
		14	15			6	5				5		
		12	12					-2					
		9	9			-2		-4					
		15	15				8				5	5	
		8	8		-2	-2							3

I-num	Informant "name"	Start Position	End Position	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	$\Sigma/(n)$
I-34	Sushma Shree Gurung	15	15		-5				-5				
		13	13					2					-3
I-35	Dhan Kumar Gurung	14	14				8					6	
		11	11				5			5	9		
		15	15			5				7			
		12	12			3	3				5		6
$\Sigma/(m)$	Average Value Q's			5	0	3	3	3	5	4	3	4	3
	Average of all Values												3

APPENDIX G

Appendix G: Segment Values of Qualifier for Friendship

I-Num	Informant "name"	Start Position	End Position	Q	$\Sigma/(n)$
I-06	Tek Bahadur Tamang	17	17	5	5
I-08	Srijana Khadka	4	4	6	6
I-09	Surya Tamang	10	10	4	4
I-12	Chandra Maya Hamal	14	14	4	
		15	15	-2	1
I-14	Sukuman Tamang	4	4	7	7
I-16	Indra Kumari BK	8	8	8	8
I-17	Santosh Bahadur BK	9	9	1	1
I-18	Ranjana Magar	8	8	5	5
I-19	Ganesh Lama	7	7	-3	
		8	8	0	-1
I-20	Rita Tamang	7	7	5	
		10	10	2	
		18	18	-2	2
I-22	Ram Bahadur Tamang	10	10	6	
		11	11	0	
		12	12	4	3
I-25	Bhuban Tamang	7	7	-5	-5
I-27	Bhim Bahadur Tamang	15	15	2	
		17	17	0	
		19	19	6	
		20	20	3	3
I-28	Ghaman Tamang	5	5	3	
		10	10	4	4
I-29	Shiva Kumari Tamang	7	7	4	
		8	8	3	
		9	9	-3	
		9	9	-3	
		9	9	-4	
		10	10	0	
		10	10	0	
		13	13	1	0
I-30	Binod Tamang	8	8	2	
		8	8	2	
		8	8	5	3
I-31	Arjun Bahadur Tamang	7	7	1	
		13	13	-1	0
I-32	Gyanu Pokharel Tamang	14	14	8	8
I-35	Dhan Kumar Gurung	8	8	2	2
$\Sigma/(n)$	Average of all Values			2	3

APPENDIX H

Appendix H: Conversion through Crisis

Informant	I-#	Begin	End	Crisis Symptom	Aftermath of Crisis
Bishal Bahadur	I-02	4	7	sickness	healing
		8	9	persecution	
				escape	father in ministry
					ministry
Rekha Tamang	I-03	4	4	depression	
				poverty	
Devi Bahadur	I-04	5	5	sickness	healing
				aimless	
		6	6		persecution
		11	12	depression	thankful
				disturbed	blessed
				frustration	given a lot
				poverty	touched in heart
				lack of peace in heart	
Tek Bahadur	I-06	4	4	tantra-mantra (bombo)	persecution
				fear	healing
		8	8		helping people
Sita Tamang	I-07	4	4	youth problems	
		5	5	lack of peace	
Surya Tamang	I-09	12	12	desperate situation	
		11	11	no hope	hope
Pabitra Kumal	I-10	5	6	demon-possession	healing
		10			curse & protection
Bhim Kali	I-11	3	3	demon-possession	healing
Chandra Maya	I-12	5	5	demon-possession	healing
Sukuman Lama	I-14	4	4	sickness	healing
		7	7		love
					peace
					joy
				respect of old people	respect of old people
Indra Kumari	I-16	4	4	problems from satan	no problems
				mental problems	healing
Santosh	I-17	5	5	drink	peace
				sickness	healing
Ganesh	I-19	6	6	sickness	healing
Rita Tamang	I-20	7	7	struggle/beating	love
Kabita Maya	I-21	5	5	sickness	healing
					healing of animal
Ram Bahadur	I-22	6	9	production of alcohol	blessing
Hari Prasad	I-23	6	6	death of children	help
Sangita Lama	I-24	5	5	sickness	healing
		11	11	demon-possession	healing
					encouragement
				fear of persecution	persecution
Bhuban Tamang	I-25	6	6	scared of father	
		16	16		healing
Aryal Bahadur	I-26	6	6	sickness	healing
					help in church
Gyanu Pokharel	I-32	5	5	quarrelling	
				lack of peace	peace
		4	6		able to read

APPENDIX J

Appendix J: Contact Sustains Sanskriti

I-Num	Start Position	End Position	Topic 1: Personal Pride and Happiness	Topic 2: Being Christian and Nepali	Topic 3: Change of Belief – Preservation of Nepalese culture
I-01	10	10	I am proud of being a Nepali		
I-02	22	22	I am proud of being a Nepali		
			I must be proud of our culture		
			I am proud of being a Tamang		
I-03	9	9	<i>Is it good to be a Christian Nepali?</i> I am proud and happy of being a Nepali		
I-04	16	17	<i>Do you feel at home being a Nepali?</i> I am proud of being a Nepali		
I-07	19	19	<i>You are a Nepali and a Christian, meaning you are proud of being a Nepali and you are a strong Nepali, and that works well together?</i> Yes. Sometimes it is difficult.		
I-08	8	8	I am proud to be called a Christian		
	12	13	<i>Do you like the Nepalese culture?</i> I am really proud to be a Nepali Christian, and serving in Nepal for Christ	<i>Do you ever feel that you left the Nepalese culture because you were a Christian, like being in an Indian or western culture?</i> I do not think I left my Nepalese culture	
I-09	11	12	I am proud to be a Christian Nepali	I am fully Christian, I am fully Nepali	I met one Buddhist brother ... who told me that you have changed your faith and Tamang culture too. Therefore immediately change your religion to your old religion. But I told him that I received my Jesus when I was in a desperate situation, therefore I will not leave my Jesus and deny him. I am not destroying my old culture but I am leaving the bad things of my culture. One thing that I have changed is that I have changed my belief, but I did not change my culture.
I-10	11	11		All Nepalis whether they believe in Jesus Christ, are Buddhists or are Hindus, all are Nepalis.	

				Before I was a real Hindu Nepali, now I am a real Christian Nepali.	
I-11	7	7		Everybody is respecting me because they have seen miraculous works in my life. Wherever I go they respect me now, especially in my village.	
I-13	9	10	I am proud of my Nepalese culture	We left everything from the old culture ...	
I-15	6	7	I am proud to be a Christian		
I-19	7	7		They could talk about me saying that I am a Christian and agree that it is not good.	
	12	12		<i>Among your relatives, do you feel as much a Nepali as they are?</i> I feel as much a Nepali as anybody else ... I felt like anybody else ... please come Nepali brother.	
I-22	19	19		<i>Do you do anything special to be a Nepali?</i> We must love our country	
I-24	15	16		My heart, all my things are Nepali, I love my country ... I love Nepal, <i>dalbhat</i> and Nepal's national food, <i>gundruk</i> and <i>dhindo</i> .	I only changed my faith, now I believe in Jesus, I am still a Nepali ... In fact, in this way I think it is possible to leave a religion and save the culture
I-26	15	15		<i>Are you as a Christian Nepali as any other non-Christian Nepali?</i> We are living in a village area, nothing is changed. Especially the Buddhists when they see us we do not live differently. It is the same we are eating; our living style is the same, when we were Buddhists and now.	That is why I am Nepali, only I have changed my faith.
I-27	23	24		<i>As a Nepali do you take pride in your own culture?</i> Yes. I am a Nepali, I love my country.	
I-28	8	8		<i>The Hindus say, I am a Hindu, I am a real Nepali, can you say the same as a Christian?</i> ...The Hindus say that the Hindus are the traditional and original religion of Nepal and the Christians are from the outside, it is a foreign religion. I am a Nepali and a Christian may cause some problems, I think I may have some problems with that. Nevertheless, I would be happy saying that I am a true Nepali	

				and a true Christian.	
I-29	14	14		<i>Can you say I am fully a Christian and fully a Nepali?</i> Yes, I can say that. I am a Nepali and I am a Christian ... I can say I am a Nepali and a Christian but even the people in Nepal they still have the concept and most of the cultures which are based on the Hindu cultures so in such cases we might find it difficult. Even though it is declared as a secular state they still have a Hindu mind.	
I-32	9	9		<i>When you think of a real Nepali, what then do you think?</i> I think of a helping heart. A Christian heart is different than other religion's hearts. I never really cared about whether I am really Nepali or not.	
I-35	16	16		<i>Do you take pride in your culture?</i> Yes. I am a 100% Christian and a 100% Nepali. Some people say that I am not a real Nepali because I am a Christian, particularly the older people.	

APPENDIX K

Appendix K: Informant Number and Pseudonyms Used

Info-No	Pseudonym	Tribe	Age	Gender	Case Area
I-01	Birbal Tamang	Tamang	45	M	Kathmandu AC
I-02	Bishal Bahadur Tamang	Tamang	41	M	Kathmandu AC
I-03	Rekha Tamang	Tamang	26	F	Kathmandu AC
I-04	Devi Bahadur Tamang	Tamang	45	M	Kathmandu AC
I-05	Ganesh Bahadur Tamang	Tamang	75	M	Gorkha AC
I-06	Tek Bahadur Tamang	Tamang	62	M	Gorkha AC
I-07	Sita Tamang	Tamang	22	F	Gorkha AC
I-08	Srijana Khadka	Chhetri	26	F	Gorkha AC
I-09	Surya Tamang	Tamang	47	M	Gorkha AC
I-10	Pabitra Kumal	Kumal	58	F	Gorkha AC
I-11	Bhim Kali Devkota	Brahmin	65	F	Gorkha AC
I-12	Chandra Maya Hamal	Hamal/Thakuri	24	F	Gorkha AC
I-13	Hem Kumar Tamang	Tamang	22	M	Gorkha AC
I-14	Sukuman Lama	Tamang	49	M	Gorkha AC
I-15	Sunita Maya Tamang	Tamang	29	F	Gorkha AC
I-16	Indra Kumari BK	Bishwokarma	31	F	Tanahun AC
I-17	Santosh Bahadur BK	Bishwokarma	48	M	Tanahun AC
I-18	Ranjana Thapa	Magar	21	F	Tanahun AC
I-19	Ganesh Lama	Tamang	24	M	Nuwakot AC
I-20	Rita Tamang	Tamang	23	F	Nuwakot AC
I-21	Kabita Maya Tamang	Tamang	40	F	Nuwakot AC
I-22	Ram Bahadur Tamang	Tamang	17	M	Nuwakot AC
I-23	Hari Prasad Tamang	Tamang	57	M	Nuwakot AC
I-24	Sangita Lama	Tamang	22	F	Nuwakot AC
I-25	Bhuban Tamang	Tamang	50	M	Nuwakot AC
I-26	Aryal Bahadur Tamang	Tamang	39	M	Nuwakot AC
I-27	Bhim Bahadur Tamang	Tamang	28	M	Kathmandu AC
I-28	Ghaman Tamang	Tamang	21	M	Kathmandu AC
I-29	Shiva Kumari Tamang	Tamang	25	F	Kathmandu AC
I-30	Binod Tamang	Tamang	27	M	Kathmandu AC
I-31	Arjun Bahadur Tamang	Tamang	27	M	Kathmandu AC
I-32	Gyanu Pokharel Tamang	Tamang	24	F	Kathmandu AC
I-33	Deepak Bahadur Gurung	Gurung	23	M	Tanahun AC
I-34	Sushma Shree Gurung	Gurung	67	F	Tanahun AC
I-35	Dhan Kumar Gurung	Gurung	30	M	Tanahun AC

APPENDIX L

Appendix L: Codes from Code System (C)

Codes – Code System (C) Early System (like file headers)	
Forming Christian Identity	Tamang Culture
Spiritual Substance	Tamang Language
Issues to MISS from the former life	Magar Language
Temptations	How to Solve Problems
Christian Family Characteristics	Discernment - Navigating in own Culture
Different Lifestyles	Sanskar Issues - Ritually
Christian Nepalese Stereotypes and Markers	Sanskriti Issues - All Nepali
Negative Stereotypes	Dashain Festival
Christian Nepalis - A New Ethnic and Social Identity	Locating the Informant
Christian (Ir)Responsibility	Dramatic Events
Family-Life	Christian - non-Christian Environment
Testimony	Extended Christian Family
Crisis giving rise to Faith	1st and 2nd Generation Christians
Pragmatism during Conversion	Looking for Guidance
Contributing factors for Conversion	The Future Church
Family-Problems causing Conversion	Church and Church Leadership
Bible-Study	Being a Good Role-Model
Friendships and Social Relationships	A new Beginning
Contextualised Socialising	Church Leadership & Leaders
Critical Social Relationships	Church Planting or Fellowship
Prayers for Traditional Nepalis	Parachurch ministerial work
Socialising across Religious Barriers	Sharing the Gospel
Experiencing Real Life and Testing Strategies	Church Growth - Incidents and Examples
Friendship with Traditional Nepalis Possible?	Leadership Structures
Pity/Sorry	Pastoral Care
Good or Bad Conscience with the Traditionals	Church Worker
Pro-active friendship building	Getting Priorities Right - Responsibility
Christians Claiming Love for non-Believers	Church History
Religious Dynamics between the two Cultures	Contextualising the Gospel (Early)
Misconception of the Christian Faith	Church Composition
Power Encounter	Foundations of Nepalese Christianity
Potential Conflicts	Fleeing due to Persecution
Christianity not Fully Accepted	Praying under Pressure
Theological Discussion	Persecution
Issues about Respect - Disrespect	Culture - Biblical and Nepali
Nepalese culture & Traditional Religions	Cultural tensions - Biblical vs Local
Nepali Traditional Work	OT and Hindu rituals
Race	Parables
Gurung Tradition	Bible

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